

FORTUNES

OF THE

FLETCHERS

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STRANGERS LEAVING THE SHIP.

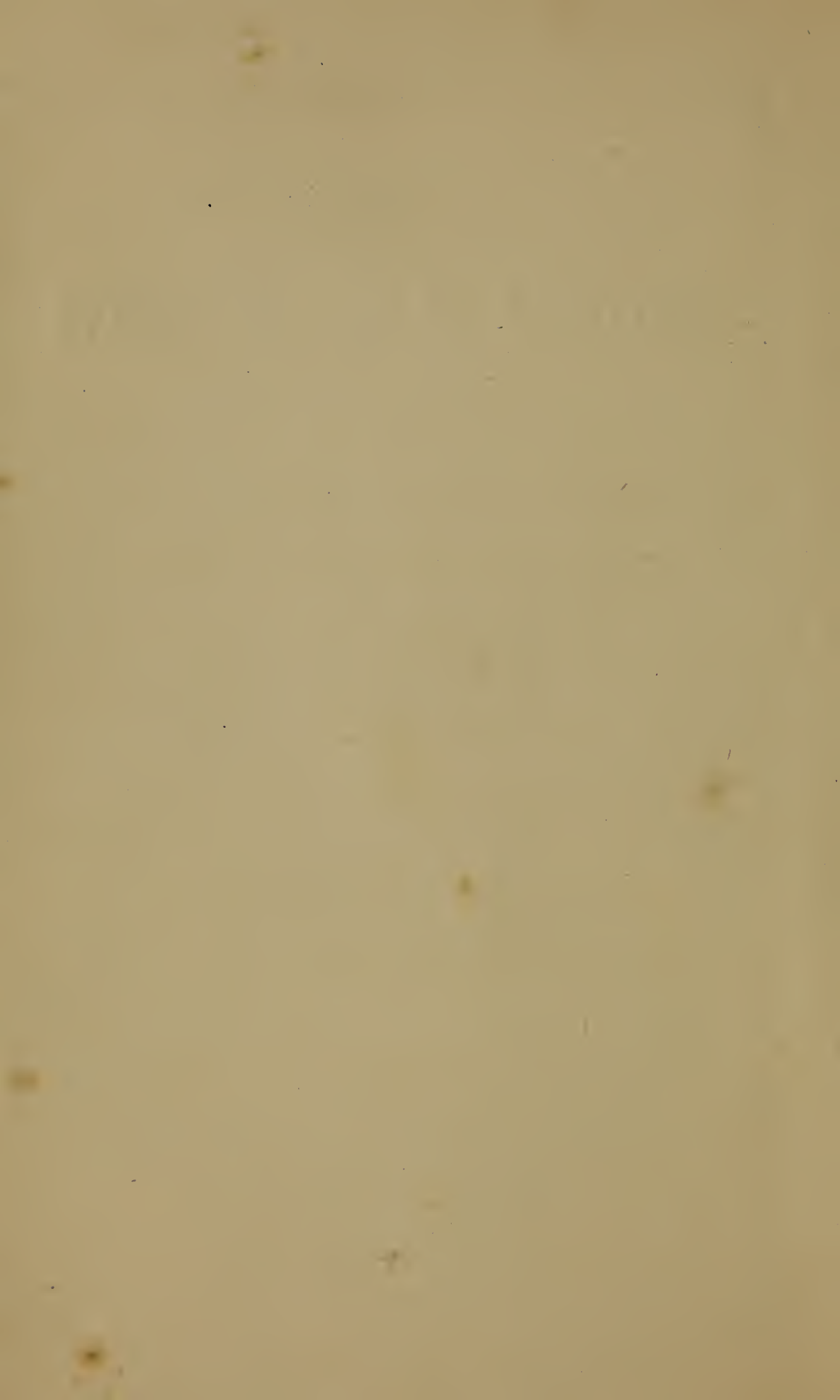
THE
Fortunes of the Fletchers:

A STORY OF
LIFE IN CANADA AND AUSTRALIA.

BY
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Author of "My Wife and I in Queensland."

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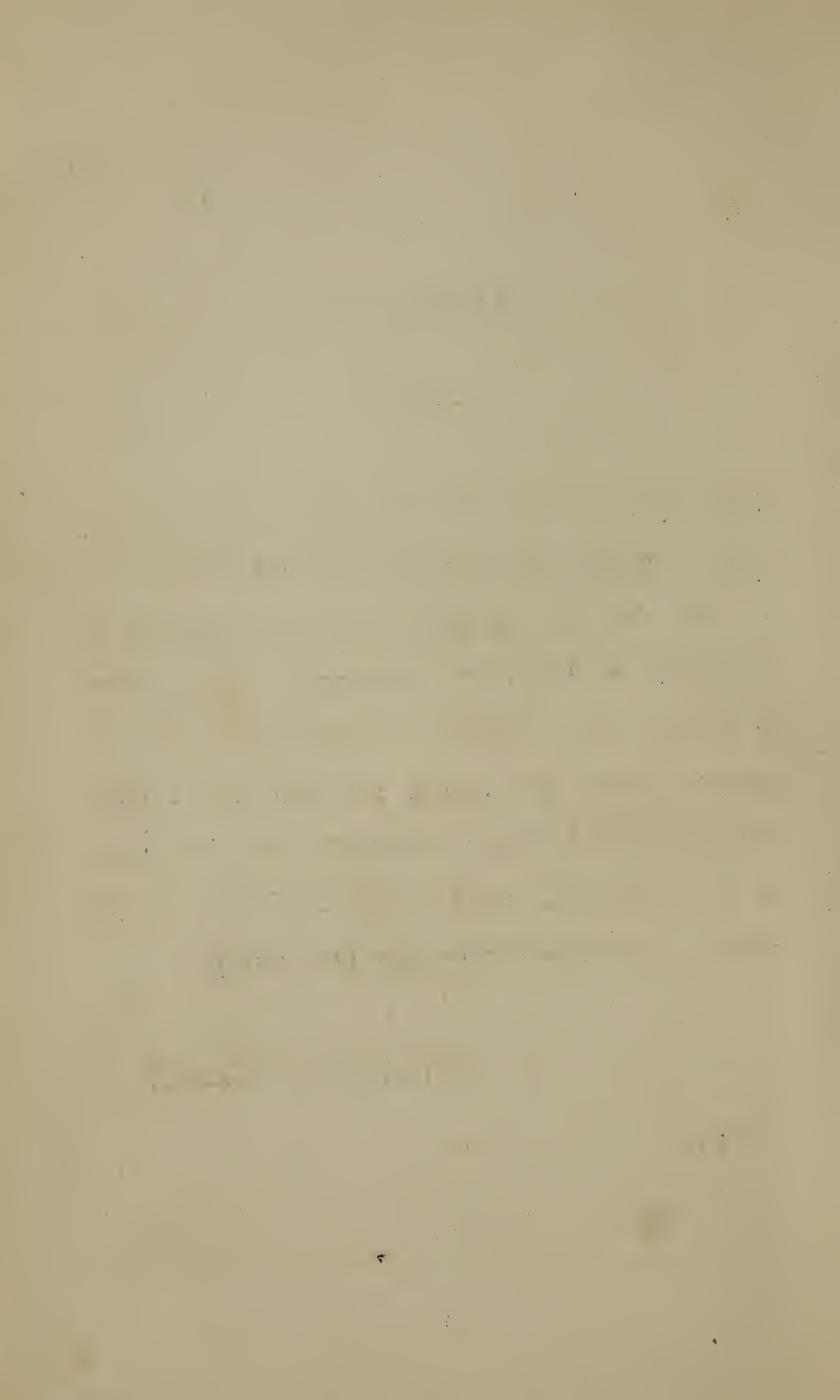
P R E F A C E.



MY object in the following pages has been to give a simple and every-day account of the kind of life that an emigrant to either Canada or Australia is likely to encounter. The scenes portrayed are as faithful as notes taken on the spots depicted can supply me with, and I trust that our kind brethren in both the Dominion and in Australia will pardon any inadvertencies of which I may have accidentally been guilty.

CHARLES H. EDEN.

1873.



THE FORTUNES OF THE FLETCHERS:

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LIFE IN CANADA AND AUSTRALIA.



CHAPTER I.

IT was the fifteenth of April, 1862, and the good ship "Zenobia," now lying with shortened cable in the River Mersey, displayed the bustle and confusion that invariably occurs on board an emigrant vessel on the eve of sailing. Of the four hundred living souls who were to call her old timbers home until she arrived at Quebec, not one seemed to have settled down into his or her place: and the vain attempts of fathers to find their families; of wives to gain intelligence of their husbands; of *all* seeking for odd bundles amongst the heaps of baggage that blocked up every portion of the deck, and which they did not know how to dispose of when found; the hoarse roar of the captain for all strangers to leave the ship; the hurried embrace and adieu, so

demonstrative in some, so heart-broken and sad in others ; the rough oaths of the seamen as they with difficulty threaded their way along the crowded gangway to perform their various duties ; the deafening scream of the tug that was blowing off her superfluous steam alongside ; all these combined to create a scene of inextricable disorder, that caused a looker-on to wonder how this apparently chaotic element could ever be reduced to order and regularity.

Standing by the port gangway are two young men and a girl, evidently brothers and sister, from their likeness ; they are talking earnestly and in a subdued tone. But again the order rings forth for all strangers to quit, and with a heart too full to speak, the younger of the men kisses his sister, muttering, " God bless you, Nellie, darling," wrings his brother's hand, and jumping over the side, descends into a shore boat, and is pulled away.

" Take me down-stairs, please, Jim, I should like to be alone a little," and James Fletcher having consigned his sister to the care of the matron in the single women's department, hurries on deck to take the last look of his native land. Meanwhile the windlass has been manned, and assisted by the strong arms of many a volunteer, the cable comes on board cheerily, while the monotonous clanking of the pauls form a not unmusical accompaniment to the

song with which the seamen lighten their labours. The tug has ceased to waste her steam, but, reserving it for its legitimate purpose, has paddled ahead of the "Zenobia," and is getting the towing hawsers on board and secured. The purser is going round and telling the people off to their berths ; the most down-hearted of the wanderers are inspirited by the rolling chorus from the forecastle. " Heaving away, sir," hails the chief officer from the bows ; round go the wheels of the tug, and slowly at first, but gathering way with every revolution of the paddles, the good ship starts on her westward journey, speeded by the dipped ensigns and hearty cheers of every vessel at anchor in the Fairway.

And now whilst the north-easterly breeze is bellying out every stitch of her canvas, giving her a good offing, and affording every prospect of a speedy passage, let us briefly revert to the circumstances that caused the principal actors in the following story to be first introduced to the reader on the deck of an emigrant ship.

Gilbert Fletcher, of Norton Farm, in the Isle of Thanet, yeoman, died suddenly at the beginning of the year in which our story commences, leaving behind him a family of three, two boys and a girl. The farm had been in the possession of the Fletchers for above two centuries, descending in an unbroken line from father to son, and great was the

astonishment throughout the island when the sale of "Norton" was announced, and the young people made known their intention of emigrating. On examination of his affairs, it was discovered that Gilbert Fletcher had plunged into speculation in a most reckless way, and that the estate was so much dipped that it would be impossible for James, the eldest son, who had recently come of age, to carry on the business with any prospect of success. Every day brought to light some new entanglement, until at last it became evident that only a few hundred pounds would remain after all just claims had been satisfied. Dreading the thought of encountering poverty in the place where they had seen better days, and also, perhaps, allured by accounts of large fortunes made, adventures encountered, and obstacles overcome, which carry with them such a natural fascination to the minds of the young, they determined on emigration. After all accounts were settled, between six and seven hundred pounds would remain, enough, with care, to give them a start in any of the colonies; and after much consultation it was settled that James and Ellen should go to Canada, while George selected Australia, thinking that his trade of wheelwright and blacksmith would find a better opening there.

Let us now describe, as nearly as we can, the characters of these young people. James, the

eldest, a strapping young man of twenty-one, had been constantly at home since his return from school, learning the practical business of a farmer, and regarding himself as the future possessor of Norton. He was a handsome lad, good-tempered, good-natured almost to a fault, and a great favourite with both the neighbours and the farm-labourers; had he been destined to remain at Norton, he would doubtless have followed in the steps of his forefathers; and had he married well, would most probably have outshone them, for he was frank, brave, and generous, and the suavity of his disposition would have enabled a prudent helpmeet to control him, as the rudder rules the huge bulk of the vessel.

The second son, George, now nineteen years of age, had from his boyhood betrayed an aptness for mechanics, and at the recommendation of his uncle John, who lived at Rochester, and had observed the bent of the boy's mind, he had been apprenticed to him as soon as his school-days were over, and soon showed himself remarkably quick and dexterous in acquiring the manual portion of a blacksmith's and wheelwright's trade. John Fletcher carried on business on a very extended scale, often performing tasks which should more properly have been the province of a machinist; thus many things were brought under the boy's notice that in any other

place than a seaport town he would have missed seeing, and his uncle being a man of enlightened views, it gave him great pleasure to satisfy to the best of his ability the ardent longing betrayed by the lad for information regarding the more complex work frequently carried on in the shop. Thus it often happened that some of the minor details of a steam thrashing machine became out of order, or a collier's pumps or windlass required readjustment, and whenever such was the case, George, after draining his uncle of his stock of knowledge, always found his way to the scene of the mishap, and by a few pertinent questions and much inward thought, rarely failed to arrive at a tolerably clear insight into the working of the machine in question. He also showed great fondness for the sea, and once a year was allowed to take a trip to the Tyne and back in a coasting brig, which to most people would hardly have been accounted a privilege, but was unalloyed felicity to him. By keeping his eyes open wherever he might be, and the habit inherent in his nature of hammering away at a thing he did not understand until he had settled it satisfactorily to himself, George picked up a variety of information which proved eminently useful in after life. He was now a broad-shouldered lad, a little above the middle height, already accounted a good, though rather a dreamy workman, of an equable and not

easily excited temperament, but warm-hearted, affectionate, and, from his readiness to oblige, much beloved by his fellow-craftsmen. Though a great family likeness existed between James and himself, the mobile expression constantly playing on the face of the former, portraying, as in a mirror, the nature of the thoughts within, was not to be found on George's countenance. The same curly chestnut hair was common to both, but in the younger brother the lip was firmer, the jaw broader, and the whole expression more steadfast and fixed. Those who judged solely by the exterior would without doubt have preferred James with his gay, ever ready laugh, and would have described George as "stolid," if not as "dull"; but those who looked beneath the surface would see that there lay within a latent depth and energy of character, requiring only the time and the place to bring to light a steadiness and determination little dreamt of by the mere outward observer.

Ellen, or little Nellie, was a pretty, fresh-looking country girl, three years younger than George, but with a mind more formed than is usual in one so youthful, for since the age of fourteen she had been installed in the office of housekeeper, whilst the poultry, the butter, and eggs, were under her sole charge; and as the dairy was large, and the reputation of the Norton butter had to be kept up, her

time was fully employed in seeing that her subordinate handmaidens performed their daily tasks ; and this responsibility, entered upon at so early an age, had given strength to her character, and habits of decision beyond her years. She was a merry, light-hearted girl, full of mischief, and with an inexhaustible fund of good spirits ; but the current of her life having hitherto wandered only through scenes which were fair and pleasant, it remained for the future to prove how she would acquit herself should the landscape alter, and clouds and tempest replace the happy carelessness of the past.

So it was finally arranged that the elder brother and sister should try their fortunes in Canada, whilst George remained to look about him a little before embarking for Australia, and could only be persuaded to take money enough to get his outfit and pay his passage.

And having now introduced our readers to the young people whose career we propose following, let us once more stand on the deck of the "Zenobia," which gallant vessel, with every stitch of canvas drawing, is fast speeding towards Canada, the "Land of Hope," whose motto is "Industry, Intelligence, and Integrity," and her emblem the prudent and far-seeing beaver. James had taken a second-class passage for his sister and himself, and Nellie was pretty comfortable in a

cabin with two other single girls. James also had two companions in his berth; but as there was a decent saloon, in which they all met for meals and sat during the day, the sleeping-apartments were but little used after their occupants had overcome the dread malady, sea-sickness. It was about noon on their fourth day from Liverpool, and Nellie, who had luckily experienced no inconvenience from the motion of the vessel, was sitting with her two cabin companions at the door of the saloon knitting, and all three were eagerly speculating on the new life before them. James, who had shown up for the first time that day, was walking the quarter-deck with one of his berth companions, who was an old traveller, and had shown him several little kindnesses whilst he was confined to his bunk from sickness. Their conversation was principally with regard to the new country towards which they were speeding, for Henry Hughes was a Canadian farmer, and from him James gathered many useful facts concerning a settler's life.

"You think, then," said the latter, "that, with patience and determination, young people can push their way?"

"I don't think at all," replied Hughes, "I am sure of it. Look at my own case; I am a Canadian born, though of English parentage, and when my father first came to the country he knew nothing

whatever about farming, or, indeed, about manual labour of any kind. He had received a college education, but a turn of fortune's wheel having ruined his family, he started for Canada with only a few pounds in his pocket, under the impression that his learning could be turned to some account. Never was a man more unfitted by nature for the rough work which he was obliged to perform to gain a livelihood ; but he persevered, and by the time I am old enough to remember he had half reclaimed the farm of which I am the present possessor. By thrift and unceasing labour, he was not only enabled to give me a good education, but to leave me a homestead well stocked with cattle, and all the implements of husbandry requisite to carry on agricultural pursuits with profit. So I say, that if a man such as I have described can do this, no young people should despond, particularly a young fellow like yourself, who has been accustomed to farming all your life. The main thing is to exercise great caution at first, and not allow yourself to be led into speculation. Put your money in the savings' bank, or any other safe investment, and look about you for a full year before you decide on purchasing. You can form no idea of the number of old-world notions you will have to discard. Most probably you are deeply versed in draining, sub-soiling, and all sorts of new-fangled fashions

which, though perfectly correct in the Isle of Thanet, would be entirely out of place in Canada. Now I know that it is by no means easy to get out of an old groove into a new one, but do it you must if you wish to succeed. It is this strong aversion to accomplishing a thing by any other method than the one they have been always accustomed to, that gives us such trouble with our immigrant labourers, who think they know much better than we do, and instead of obeying our orders, stand and wrangle, in fact wish to teach *us*. A very short time certainly knocks this conceit out of them, but it is provoking enough whilst it lasts."

"Well, I shall try and prove an exception to the general rule," said James, laughing, "for you may rest assured that I shall not attempt to force my views on the Canadians. But here come the emigrants aft for their water; how happy they seem, and how soon the hideous confusion that reigned on board at first has given place to order and routine. I begin to think that my sea-sickness was not a bad thing after all, as it caused me to remain utterly indifferent to the turmoil."

"Yes," replied Hughes, "in a good ship like this, the discordant elements are shaken into shape in a wonderfully short time; but it is not always so. In many vessels even now the emigrants are very badly treated, either from the parsimony of

the owners or the apathy of the officers and crew. An agricultural labourer is entirely at the mercy of a brutal captain and his subordinates. Whilst helplessly sea-sick and strange to all around him, he is cuffed and kicked into subjection, and if he dares to remonstrate is knocked down and put in irons for mutiny. The captain of such a vessel has always got creatures ready to swear to anything, so if the sufferer tries to obtain redress on landing, his testimony is overruled."

"But how different things are here," said James.

"True enough, because the skipper happens to be a good and humane man ; but if he were otherwise, what is to hinder him from doing exactly as he liked? A captain's power is almost without limit, and according to his disposition so will he exercise that power."

"Then what remedy would you suggest, for it seems monstrous that inoffensive passengers should be at the mercy of one man's caprice?"

"The evil is apparent enough," rejoined the Canadian ; "but the cure is yet to be found. Much has been done already by preventing overcrowding, laying down a legal scale of provisions, and bettering the accommodation, more particularly for the single women ; but, after all, this places no restraint on the skipper after the ship has got into blue water. Surgeon-superintendents are indeed

employed to look after the passengers, but, in many cases, they are young inexperienced men, just entering their profession, and only too ready to chime in with any suggestion from the captain. No; my idea has always been to send a naval officer in every emigrant ship, to see that the helpless passengers meet with fair play. Plenty of half-pay lieutenants would be glad of such employment, and they would be no expense to the country, for I would make the ship-owners pay their salary. One of her Majesty's officers would be entirely independent, regardless of the odium of owners, and, not retaining his appointment by virtue of the good report of the captain, would perform his duty fearlessly and straightforwardly, and effectually check any tyranny or abuse of power. Of course he should have nothing whatever to do with the management of the ship or crew, nor be allowed to interfere with the captain in any way, unless his advice were asked. Such an officer would, I think, meet every requirement; but whether we shall ever see such an appointment made is very doubtful. Ship-owners are a powerful and influential class in the House, and morbidly jealous of any supervision by a Queen's officer, and they would all unite to prevent such a measure becoming law. However, things improve as the world wags onward, and why shouldn't the comfort

of emigrants be tardily recognised? But come along now to dinner, for two bells has just struck."

The voyage passed away without any incident of importance; the weather was exceptionally favourable, the passengers well tended and comfortable; and, owing to the precautions and care taken by the doctor, the sanitary condition of the ship was perfect. There were a great many Irish on board, not the Anglicised Irishman in city clothing, but the genuine wild Paddy, fresh from the bogs, and clad in the long-tailed coat, knee-breeches and stockings that are now rarely seen but in the more remote parts of the country, or on the typical Irishman of the stage. One old fellow, who had a wife and a heap of children of all sizes on board, made himself conspicuous by his anxiety to get up a fight, and the sedulous care he took of an old tin kettle. The crew being called hurriedly aft one day to trim the sails, the sudden trampling of feet roused old Flannigan from a reverie, in which, comfortably leaning against the bitts, he was indulging. His cherished idea came to the surface at once, for, thinking such a scurry could only be the prelude to "a bit of a scrimmage," he seized an iron belaying-pin from the rack, and was about to apply it to the heads of those nearest to him, when, amidst roars of laughter, it was wrenched out of his hand by the mate, who was luckily

standing by, and the old fellow disappeared between decks in high dudgeon at being baulked of his morning's amusement. His attachment to the old kettle had nearly ended in a tragedy. This cherished utensil was the only vessel belonging to the whole family capable of holding water, and some of the uses to which it was put were certainly never contemplated by its constructor. Like the chest in the "Deserted Village," it "contriv'd a double debt to pay," and it was, doubtless, these qualities that caused Flannigan to regard it with such unbounded satisfaction. However, one morning early, when it was so calm that the ship was scarcely moving through the water, he made his appearance on deck, kettle in hand, and, leaning over the bulwarks, was in the act of emptying it into the sea, when, with a lazy flap, the fore staysail sheet caught him under the coat-tails, and overboard, with a wild yell, went Flannigan, kettle and all. He could not swim a stroke, and floundered about, sticking to the kettle most manfully. Meanwhile, all the confusion attendant on such an event reigned on board the ship. The passengers swarmed up the hatchways, getting in everybody's way; the women yelled and screamed; and the scene was only ended by Henry Hughes, James's Canadian friend, jumping overboard with a life-buoy, and rescuing both Pat and his kettle.

James divided his time pretty equally between Hughes, from whom he picked up many valuable hints, and Miss Bessie Marsden, one of Nellie's cabin companions, a pretty girl of about eighteen, who was going out to join her uncle in Canada West. With her James had contrived to establish a pleasant acquaintance, a proceeding much approved of by Nellie, who had already taken a great fancy to Miss Bessie.

But now they had entered the broad basin of the St. Lawrence ; had furled the sails that for four weeks had pressed them westward ; had been taken in tow by the hissing little steam-tug, and watched the noble river contract from a breadth at which land could barely be distinguished on either side, to a glorious stream two miles wide ; had looked with longing eyes at the fair and fertile Isle of Orleans, above which the River St. Charles casts its quota into the bosom of its giant sister ; had seen a city rising with stately palaces, mansions, and churches ; had heard the sullen splash as the heavy anchor dropped from the bows, and the cable rattled out through the hawse pipe ; and then a mighty cheer had burst forth from the wanderers, for the city before them was Quebec, smiling down from her heights a welcome to the new-comers ; the land of promise was before them ; the "Zenobia's" mission was ended.

CHAPTER II.

“FLETCHER, you and your sister had better come on shore with me as soon as the health officers have visited the ship,” said Hughes. “I know a cheap and comfortable house where you can put up for a day or two, until you have thought over your plans ; and landing as a stranger, you are pretty sure to be taken in. Don’t you think that will be best, Miss Fletcher?”

But Nellie was too much occupied in gazing at the city to hear his question ; and those who look on Quebec for the first time need not apologise for having their whole attention taken up. Piled upon a rocky eminence, with her public buildings, palaces, many churches, quaint, high-gabled houses, colleges and cupolas reflected in the majestic St. Lawrence at her feet, Quebec bears away the palm from all competitors, and, unique in her beauty, stands confessedly the Queen of the Western World. As is the case in many places, the traveller is a little disappointed on landing—a nearer inspection bringing to light many imperfections that the kindly distance veiled. Thus the streets seem tortuous,

narrow, and dirty; the public buildings uncouth and workhouse-like; and, when in the city itself, the curious effect wrought by the contrast between the bright tin often used for roofing and spires, and the sombre stone constituting the body of the buildings, is unperceived. But there is no lack of life. French market-women raise a Babel that transports the new arrival to Havre or Rouen; the river bank is lined with wharfs, warehouses, and shipping; the broad stretch of the St. Lawrence is plentifully dotted with white sails; and, threading their way cautiously through these, passenger steamers—curious and uncouth in their raised tiers of decks and beam engines—glide rapidly to and fro, or snorting little tugs struggle impatiently with large fields of felled timber, the produce of the lumberer's labour on the shores of the far-distant lakes.

At the time of which we are now speaking (1862), Quebec was the seat of Government of the two Canadas, and the census taken the year previously showed a population of 51,000 inhabitants. Since then it has grown immensely, and in the course of things will continue to increase, for it is on the highway to the continent of Europe. From Quebec start the many vessels laden with the golden grain of the fertile north-west. There the old and worn timber-ship takes in her cargo of lumber; while the River St. Charles, with a rise and fall of nearly

fifteen feet, offers remarkable facilities for the construction of docks of any dimensions. The French language is usually spoken in Lower Canada, not by any means pure Parisian, but an ancient *patois* that is supposed to have been fashionable in the reign of Henri IV., and the mixture of this with English, dashed with Yankee expressions, sounds strangely in the ears of a new-comer.

Right glad were both Nellie and James when they found themselves snugly ensconced in a comfortable house, and tasted anew the luxury of clean sheets in a bed that did not rock about. Nor was the fresh bread and butter by any means unacceptable. Only those who have taken long voyages can ever know the intense longing that arises for these two simple articles of every-day diet. Escorted by Henry Hughes, who was most attentive to Nellie, and pointed out with great assiduity every object of interest, they made the tour of the town, and quite tired out and bewildered by the strange scene, betook themselves to bed betimes.

The next morning, accompanied by Hughes, James went to the Government Land Office, to ascertain what part of the country was best adapted to an immigrant in his circumstances. His own idea was to settle somewhere in the eastern counties, which lie to the southward of the St. Lawrence, and belong to Lower Canada; but this was strongly

combated by Hughes, who urged that four-fifths of the inhabitants were French, who held their land under the old *seigneurie* system, who were of a different religion, and whose priests were averse to Protestants owning the land, as the latter were exempted from paying tithes, so that every non-Roman Catholic settler was a sheer loss to the priest. "Besides," he added, "the country is better in Canada West, the seasons less severe, and you are among your own people ; so look here, James, suppose Miss Fletcher and yourself come to my farm for a time—I can find plenty of work for you to do, so you needn't hesitate on the score of delicacy—I'll undertake to make you useful, and you can both be picking up our Canadian fashions, which you will find rather different to what you have been already accustomed to, I reckon."

The invitation was so frankly given, and, moreover, was so remarkably advantageous to James, that he readily assented, should Nellie consent, and was profuse in his thanks to Hughes, who cut him short with "All right, man ; I'll answer for Miss Fletcher when I've explained it all to her ; and now come along home, and we'll pack up and start right off to-morrow morning."

Early the next morning saw the party on the deck of the steamer bound to Montreal, a mode of travelling they preferred to the railway, on account

of the luggage, the expense, and the opportunity it gave them of seeing the country. The scenery of the St. Lawrence is very beautiful, fertile farms sloping downward to its banks, numerous islands studding its bosom, and a grand background of primeval forest. They had a good many fellow-passengers, most of them Americans, but they were very quiet and unobtrusive, with an air of anxiety about them. Nellie noticed that many of them were in mourning, and one lady sat apart vainly endeavouring to repress her tears. A cloud overhung their country, the mighty struggle which sundered state from state and set brother and brother in battle array against each other, was at its height. The news of a Northern success had that morning reached them; but at what a price to the poor mother, whose two fair sons are sleeping in their bloody graves beneath the hemlock-trees on the far-away Potomac! James, while looking over the bows at the scenery, was addressed by the man next him, an ill-looking ruffian as ever fell to man's lot to see.

"You're a Britisher, I guess?"

"Yes," replied James.

"Don't often see a brook like this in the old country, I reckon?" and with a squirt of tobacco and a wave of a very dirty hand he indicated the noble river.

"No," said James ; after which there was a short pause, and he was turning away, when his new acquaintance broke out—

"Say, stranger, what do your House of Lords say to our big fight over here ; reckon it will burst us up, don't they ?"

James professed his ignorance of the light in which that august assembly viewed the conflict, and the Yankee continued, "Reckon we dressed the notches off the Secesh varmint the other day."

"Indeed," said James, now becoming interested, as he found himself face to face with one who had so recently taken part in the mighty struggle ; "you were there, were you ?"

"Guess my name was there ; but this child's too 'cute to trust *his* carcass within range of a Secesh shooting-iron. 'Calkilate if I'd a been in every place my name were called, I'd be smart at division."

"What do you mean ?" said James.

"Well, just this. You've heard of bounty—twenty dols to each *recruit* ? Wall, so did I ; and as I kinder guessed the dollars would be some use to me, and I should be no use to Uncle Sam, I 'listed in seven different regiments in one day, and sloped the same night. That's how it kum my name war there and I wasn't. Darned hard work I had to make tracks, but Secesh or Feds it is

all one to me now, for I 'm onder the British flag," and the unblushing scoundrel pointed to the emblem of liberty waving from the flagstaff, as James turned indignantly away.

"Yes," said Hughes, when he told him the story, "there are many thousands of rascals of that type, who have come to the surface since the war broke out—men devoid of patriotism, who do not scruple to take advantage of their country's dire need, and who are lost even to the very sense of shame, and glory in their misdeeds. That fellow is a specimen of the class, and no doubt he would be highly mortified if he thought his conduct was regarded as anything worse than 'a smart trick.'"

The distance from Quebec to Montreal is about 180 miles, and the following day saw our party landed, and under Hughes' guidance doing the lions of the place. The city of Montreal stands on the south side of an island of the same name at the confluence of the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers. It is situated at the base of the Royal Mountain, from whence it takes its name, and is divided into an upper and lower town, the former of which has wide streets and large handsome buildings, whose glittering tin or sheet-iron roofs sparkle in the sun, and present a pleasing appearance from the distance. The lower town has a cramped and gloomy aspect; the streets are narrow and ill-paved, and

the houses are generally in the French style with dark iron shutters.

On the following day they started by train for Kingston, on the shores of Lake Ontario, from whence they were to make their way by waggon to Hughes' farm. Kingston is the naval and military head-quarters of the Province of Canada West, and next to Quebec and Halifax it is the strongest post in all British America. The harbour is very fine, the water deep, and the entrance protected by Wolfe and Garden Islands, which lie opposite the city at a distance of three miles. On the east of the bay is the entrance to the Rideau Canal, which joins the Ottawa and the lake. The town has a dockyard, and is strongly fortified; the streets are regularly laid out, crossing each other at right angles, and the houses have a substantial appearance, from being built of blue limestone, which is quarried in the vicinity. It has many advantages in its situation, which make it the natural depôt of those articles of commerce which are transported over the lake in vessels, and up and down the river in boats. Here as at a common centre they meet, and deposit or exchange their cargoes. To James and Nellie the railways seemed curious, with the large locomotive bearing an inverted cone or "smoke stack" in place of a funnel, the deep hollow boom given forth, instead of the shrill whistle of the English engines,

and the arrangement of the carriages or "cars," which have a passage down the centre of the train, so that the guard can traverse the entire length, or the passenger, weary of sitting, can stroll about and stretch his legs.

Having stored such portions of their luggage as they fancied they could dispense with, until the return trip of the waggon, and seen it fairly started on its road by "Micky," Hughes' teamster, who had been expecting his master for some days, they all three took their seats in the stage which would deposit them at Bison, a small town within seven miles of "Grassmere," as the farm was named. At first their road led past fertile and long-settled tracks of land, where the fields were neatly fenced off with telegraph wire, the cattle and sheep grazed at leisure on the young pasture, and the houses and farm buildings of frame-work or stone looked beautifully neat, and spoke of wealth and comfort. But on the following day, soon after leaving the little village where they had slept, the farms became straggling, and it became evident they were reaching a less thickly populated district. The road too, which hitherto had been remarkably good, began to give them unmistakable notice that they were in the bush; and when the stage began jolting and bounding about so that she could only with difficulty keep her seat, Nellie gave a little scream,

which afforded Henry a sufficient excuse to put his arm round her waist to hold her in, whilst he explained to her "that the sudden roughness was only caused by a bit of corduroy road over a swamp," the said corduroy road being formed of round logs from a foot to eighteen inches in diameter, laid side by side across the full breadth of the road, and forming a causeway more durable than comfortable. But by noon they had reached Bison, with its picturesque little church on an eminence overlooking the small lake on whose banks it lay; its grist and saw-mills, put in motion by the stream, that, rushing merrily down the slope, threw itself into the still waters below; its two or three stores, where everything from a penny whistle to a sheet anchor could be bought; its tavern, with a huge board swinging in front, on which was portrayed with considerable humour two beavers playing at cards—the handiwork of a rowdy artist, who had cleared off an old score and commenced a fresh one with mine host by this specimen of his skill; its dozen or so of dwellings, ranging, according to their several pretensions, from the full-blown house, glorious in sash frames and glazing, to the log shanty, with no entrance for the light but by the door; and the stage stopping at the door of the "Cosy Castors," they dismounted to test the truth of the announcement, that good liquor and good

accommodation could be had within for both man and beast. Henry was cordially welcomed by his friends, and many admiring glances were cast at Nellie by the young men who dropped in, nominally to greet their old companion, but if the truth must be told a good deal to get a peep at the pretty English girl ; and before dinner was over and the horses could be put to the waggonette that was to take them to Grassmere, the run on the house was so great that a fresh keg had been broached, and the landlord, as he tucked the buffalo robe around her knees, said feelingly, "If the young lady likes to stay here for a week she shall and welcome, good luck to her pretty face." The horses went freely, the light vehicle was a most agreeable change from the heavy stage, and the beautiful spring afternoon with its varied tints of foliage made the whole party light-hearted and happy, particularly Henry, who was looking forward with delight to introducing his friends to his bush home. The sun was sinking behind the forest, gilding the transparent leaves of the sycamores, and blending with the young shoots of the spruce fir as they moved gently to and fro wafted by the fragrant air, when, after about half-a-mile of corduroy, they came to a snake fence, entering which, and crossing a rude bridge over a sparkling little stream, a neat frame house stood before them, with log outhouses and cattle sheds,

and Henry, flinging the reins to one of the men who had answered to his joyous holloa, handed Nellie from the waggonette, bidding her welcome to Grassmere.

Patsy Donnelly, the better-half of "Micky," the man who was following them with the luggage, was with difficulty restrained from embracing her master; but, becoming calmer, worked away with a will at providing a good supper, while she poured forth an unceasing torrent of news. How "the ould baste of a bull, bad cess to iv'ry hair of him, had bruk ciane into tne sugar camp and capsized the troughs," and a marvellous account of a bear that had visited the store-room several times, made free with the cask of pork, and nearly killed Snap, the terrier, who had been chained up to protect it. After supper, Henry and Patsey set to work preparing a room for Nellie, and with the readiness that only a bush or a sailor's life gives, the little apartment soon looked snug and comfortable, though necessarily devoid of articles of mere luxury.

"Now, James," said Hughes, "you and I must see to our sleeping arrangements, for we go shares in a room, so come with me, and hold this pine knot while I show you how to knock up a comfortable bed. Some men would roll themselves in their buffalo robes and sleep before the fire on the ground; but it is a lazy habit, and taking a little trouble

saves many a bad cold. Patsy, get out four sacks and split the ends open."

The torch threw a lurid glare on the buildings as James and Henry stepped out into the darkness, the latter armed with his Canadian axe. They made their way to the wood heap, and selected a pine log two feet in diameter, which Henry, with what seemed to James marvellous rapidity, "logged off" into fourunks about five feet in length. Then searching about for some straight pine saplings, he cut four of them into eight feet lengths.

"That will do, James ; stick the pine knot in the ground, and let's roll the logs in."

James, at a loss to know what it all meant, or how four rough logs with the bark on could ever make a comfortable bed, did as he was told, and then watched while Henry made two deep notches in each log the exact breadth of the sacks, taking care that the inner face of each notch was vertical, or better still, leaning over a little. He then placed one log notches uppermost, where the head of James' bed was to be, the other parallel to it (having previously cut corresponding notches), and about seven feet off, where the foot should come ; passed a pair of pine saplings through two sacks, whose ends had been cut open, placed their projecting ends in the notches, and hey, presto ! there was a comfortable bedstead made in a few minutes, and

raised eighteen inches from the floor, so as to be well clear of all draughts.

This simple method of making a bed should be known to all bushmen, and is most useful in travelling. Of course on a journey you would have a piece of canvas, about seven feet by three feet six, fitted with eyes or loops through which to thrust the poles, instead of using sacks, and in the morning, or when you are breaking up camp, you withdraw the poles, leave them there in case of your return, roll up the canvas, and start away, the freshness resulting from a sound night's repose more than compensating for the time lost in preparing your bed.

As the axe has been here mentioned, and as that instrument is fully equivalent to a whole chest of tools in the hands of an expert Canadian, it may not be amiss to describe it and the method of using it, for the benefit of those who, dwelling in civilised communities, have but little idea of the variety of work that can be done by that single implement. The axe, or in its smaller form, the hatchet, is the first tool that naturally suggests itself to man to supply his earliest and most pressing wants. Whether it be to fell trees to construct a shelter from the weather, to hollow out a rude canoe, or to fashion the spears and bows that constitute his sole means of defence, the first care of the savage is to provide himself with some instrument of the kind; hence amongst the

earliest relicts of man are to be found bone and flint tools imperfectly corresponding to the modern axe, changing as civilisation spread into copper and iron. The early inhabitants of South America and Mexico made use of a metallic axe of mixed copper and tin sufficiently hard to cut porphyry and granite. The old Druidical axe was of pure copper, and the hardy Northerners, the forefathers of the Vikings, approached nearer to modern days, for their implement was of iron. At this very moment the savage aboriginal of the Australian continent constructs a tomahawk of stone, sufficiently hard to enable him to cut out the opossum and the bandicoot from the trees where they have sought shelter. Thus the material and make of an old axe-head enables the antiquarian of the present day to form no mean estimate of the degree of civilisation to which its ancient owners had attained; and strange though it may seem, the axe is still the instrument by which an energetic and pushing race may be distinguished from a land of dreamers. Witness the beautifully-constructed, brightly-polished, well balanced American axe, perfect in every detail, and whose ring is heard from the mahogany regions of Yucatan and Honduras to the teak forests of Burmah and Nepaul, and compare this marvellous tool with one turned out from the factories of poor, somnolent, dead-and-alive old Spain, with its head

painfully hammered out and looped over to make the eye, its rugged weld, its general unshapeliness, —uncouth and ugly as in the days of Cervantes. Compare the two instruments, lay them side by side and examine them, and I think, reader, you will find them wonderfully typical of the diverse characters of the two nations.

But the wedge-shaped American axe is the one with which we have at present to deal. In the most recent processes, the iron used is bar iron, the bars of different lengths, but of certain fixed sizes for different tools ; it is heated to a red heat, cut of the requisite length, and the eye which is to receive the handle punched through it ; it is then reheated and pressed between concave dies until it assumes the proper shape. It is now heated and grooved upon the edge, receiving in that groove the piece of steel which forms the sharp edge ; borax is used as a flux, and at a white heat the axe is welded and drawn out to a proper edge by trip hammers. The next process is hammering off the tool by hand, restoring the shape lost in drawing out ; it is then ground to form a finer edge and the head, and shaved down to its final symmetry. After this it is ground on stones finer than before, and is ready for the temperer. The axe is now hung upon a revolving wheel in a furnace, over a small coal fire, at a peculiar red heat, judged by the eye ; is cooled in salt

and water, then in fresh water, and removed to another furnace, where it receives the last temper, the degree of heat being regulated by thermometers. Then it is polished to a finish that shows every flaw, and enables it to resist rust and to enter wood easily; next it is stamped, the head blacked with a mixture of turpentine and asphaltum to prevent rust, and is weighed, labelled, and sold.

Such is a brief account of the various processes through which this tool, so indispensable to the backwoodsman, passes, an account that I have not scrupled to inflict upon the reader, for no man in Canada, Australia, or anywhere else, can know too much about the American axe. The handles are of a peculiar shape, being slightly curved towards the end, which is larger than the rest of the shaft, to prevent its slipping through the fingers. A good deal depends on the choice of the handle, which should be made of springy hickory-wood, with a curve to the liking of the axeman; and the head, which ought to weigh about eight pounds, should be well hung and firmly wedged, for many is the blade that has flown off and been lost, from disregard to this precaution.

Before felling a tree, always look which way it leans; or, if it should be quite upright and you are anxious to lay it in any particular direction, *always commence cutting on that side.* Hold the handle at

its extreme end, but not too tightly, and standing at a proper distance from the trunk swing the axe round your head and let it enter the tree obliquely. Make your next cut beneath it and horizontally, and never be afraid of leaving too great a space between the cuts, for the great fault with newcomers is that they never give themselves room enough, and their axe becomes "wooded" long before they get to the centre of the tree. Only practice can enable the eye to judge the correct distance, which of course differs in every tree according to its diameter. By skilful management a tree can be thrown in almost any position you please.

Splitting is the next process for which the axe is wanted, and to effect this, lay the log flat on the ground, bury your axe lengthways with the grain near the end, work it free, and bury it again close to and in a line with the first chop, and so on until the tree is split, which is much sooner than from reading this description you would expect. Only time and a good eye will bring the dexterity requisite to strike again and again within a hair's breadth of the spot you select, and the young axeman is particularly liable to become discouraged in "splitting," when he finds he fails repeatedly to plant his cut in a straight line with its predecessor; but let him take courage and persevere, for it will all come

in time. Two men who understand their work can split logs of six or seven feet in diameter, by burying their axes alternately, so that one acts as a wedge and assists in freeing the other. Never attempt to split a log by setting it up on end, and if your tree be too large to be sundered by the axe, let nothing induce you to use wedges, until you thoroughly understand the lumberer's business. More fearful accidents have happened from green hands playing with wedges than from any other cause; they suddenly "spring," or fly out, the axeman slips, and stretching out his hand to save himself, is caught by the closing fissure, and meets the fate of Milo of Cretona, "he who of old would rend the oak." Over the roaring fire in the lumberer's shanty, as the hot strong tea goes its rounds, the listener will hear many a story of a torturing and lingering end brought about by "springing wedges," and several instances are mentioned in which the sufferer has freed himself from his woody prison by severing the entrapped limb with his axe, only to perish miserably by hæmorrhage and cold. By the professional lumberers wedges are often used, and are made of iron, driven by an enormous mallet or "beetle," formed of wood bound with iron rings; but the inexperienced settler had much better leave them alone, for all the timber he is likely to want can be easily worked with the axe alone.

“Logging up” a tree, that is to say, cutting it into lengths after it has been felled, will be one of the settler’s principal tasks, and by no means such an easy one as it may seem. To chop a tree into logs, the axeman stands on it with his legs apart, and works between them, making his cuts in the same way as if felling, except that both right and left strokes are oblique, instead of one being horizontal. When one-half has been cut through, the other side is commenced on, and the great difficulty that new hands encounter is to make these two giant notches meet at the same point. A man should get good command over his axe by felling, which is by far the least dangerous work, before trying to “log up.” Not every one can swing his arms freely when balanced on a log, and from the position of the legs, should the axe fly through catching a twig, or being incorrectly held, the unskilful tyro may receive a wound that will send him halting through life, if nothing worse happens.

In the use of the axe strength is not nearly so important as skill. Once attain the knack of a good free swing and the rest will be easy. Did you ever, reader, watch a man-of-war’s man in the chains heaving the lead? if so, you can form a very good estimate of how the body should sway when wielding the axe. Arms, body, and instrument all act in unison, whirled round the head, now to right, now

to left, the keen blade buries itself in the forest giant at each stroke, and in an incredibly short time the crash of the splintering boughs announce that the monarch of a thousand years has succumbed to the little iron wedge, and that so much more ground is added to the settler's clearing.

The following morning after breakfast our emigrants went out to inspect the farm; but we had better reserve a description of this for the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

HENRY HUGHES' farm consisted of about one hundred and fifty acres already cleared, and several hundred acres of forest land, one portion of which contained a large quantity of maple trees (*Acer saccharinum*), which constituted the "sugar bush," from which in the early spring the sugar and molasses, both for home use and for sale, were manufactured. As has been mentioned, it had been partially cleared by his father some years before, and every succeeding winter saw a new piece of land, however small, reclaimed. To assist him in the management of the farm, he had Micky and Silas Quidd, a New Englander; while Patsy attended to the household affairs, and was great at sugar-boiling and fruit-preserving. During the harvest, or when any extra help was required, labourers, of whom there were plenty always going about seeking employment, were engaged by the week or day, but as a rule the Grassmere household consisted only of the three persons above mentioned. The house was very neatly built of sawn planks, lined both within and without, the roof being covered with cedar shingles. The outbuildings and cattle sheds were constructed

of logs. To the eye of an Englishman, fresh from the trim hedges and clean fields of his own country, a Canadian farm appears in terrible disorder. The rough snake fences,* the half-decayed stumps cropping up in all directions, the uncouth implements of husbandry, and, above all, the apparent waste of land, form an unpleasant contrast to the order and regularity he has left behind him. The picturesque is painfully absent, and the ugly log fences invest the place with a sense of bleakness, mingled with neglect. Generally the Englishman views everything with a disparaging eye, and thinks to himself, "When I begin, I'll do so on a different system from this; I'll have good double-mould board ploughs, and root out every stump before a crop goes into the ground." But in a very few months he drops into the way of the country, the fences cease to offend, the prize plough has been wrenched to the death against an eight-foot stump on the second occasion of using it, and reluctantly he is brought to confess that the Canadians know what suits their own land better than he a stranger ever can, and the trite proverb of "When at Rome, do as Rome does," comes home to him with all the force of practical experience.

Nelly, anxious to lose no single moment in learning how the dairy was managed, put herself

* *Vide* page 54.

under Patsy's charge, and was by her triumphantly convoyed to the cowhouse. Henry and James, accompanied by Silas, made the round of the farm. It was now nearly the end of May, and the crops had to be got in without delay, so it was arranged that on the following day James should turn his first sod in the new country, and try his hand with the oxen. He expressed his belief that he should manage it easily, to which Henry said nothing, but glanced at Silas, who looked more glum than ever, that being his fashion of showing he was amused, for, unlike most of his countrymen, he never spoke, and it was harder work to extract anything beyond a monosyllable from him than to drag up a hundred-year old hemlock stump. An instance of his taciturnity was soon witnessed. When they came to the pasture where the oxen were feeding, Henry said, "Did you doctor old Brindle, Silas?"

A nod by way of reply.

"I don't see him with the rest."

A negative shake of the head.

"What! is he in the cattle-shed still?"

Another shake.

"Then I suppose you've turned him out into the bush to pick up his condition?"

"No," was the answer.

"Then where the deuce is he?" said Henry, impatiently.

“Dead, I reckon,” replied the imperturbable Silas, driven at length to open his lips.

“Dead ! what in the world killed him ? ”

“Poison.”

“Poisoned through your carelessness, I suppose?” said Henry, angrily.

“Mistake—wrong physic,” beyond which lucid explanation Henry could glean nothing ; but he knew the man too well to feel more than passing annoyance at the loss of a valuable ox, and it turned out it was as much his own fault as Quidd’s, for the bottles were unlabelled.

The next morning James had a try with the plough, and as the fallow was pretty clear of stumps and stones he managed very well ; but when he tried to drive the oxen, he had to confess himself fairly beaten. To a man unused to them, oxen are the most provoking brutes in the world, and he who keeps his temper when they commence their vagaries must be almost more than human. They are as cunning as possible, and know at once when a new hand is driving them ; but time was too valuable to admit of James perfecting himself in the art just then, so he had to content himself with the promise that he should pilot the waggon the next time it went to Bison. So the days passed away quickly and happily, for they were always hard at work. Micky had arrived long since with

the luggage, and Henry and James had now got more civilised beds than the rough sack arrangements described in the last chapter. Nellie had her hands full, for the cows had to be milked and the butter made, the poultry looked after, the wool spun, and the clothes repaired. The bread-baking, too, was no unimportant part of the day's work. The oven was a curious-looking thing made of clay, standing on four legs, and some few yards from the back of the house. The use of this was simple enough; the great secret lay in the yeast, or "hop-rising," as it is called, and as a knowledge of this indispensable article must always prove useful, I here insert the recipe. Boil two double handfuls of hops in a gallon of soft water until the hops sink to the bottom of the vessel; mix a dessert-plateful of flour with enough cold water to form a smooth, thick batter, which place in a basin large enough to hold at least a gallon of water. Now, into this basin strain the hot hop water, somebody stirring away until the batter is well mixed with it. When sufficiently cool to admit of the finger being placed in it, add a cupful of the former barm or a bit of leaven to set it working. After it has worked well, bottle, cork it, and place it in a cool place in summer, and where it will not freeze in winter. Some persons add two or three mealy potatoes boiled and finely bruised, and it is a great improve-

ment during the cool months of the year. The lady* from whom the foregoing receipt is taken, says :—"The following method I found made more palatable and lighter bread than flour mixed in the usual way. Supposing I wanted to make up about a stone and a half of flour, I boiled (having first pared them carefully), say three dozen, good-sized potatoes in about three quarts or a gallon of water, till the liquor had the appearance of a thin gruel, and the potatoes had become almost entirely incorporated with the water. With this potato gruel the flour was mixed up, no water being required, unless by chance I had not enough of the mixture to moisten my flour sufficiently. The same process of kneading, fermenting with barm, &c., is pursued with the dough as with other bread. In baking it turns of a bright light brown, and is lighter than bread made after the common process, and therefore I consider the knowledge of it serviceable to the emigrant's family.

"Salt-rising" is a barm much used by the Yankee settlers; but though the bread is decidedly whiter and prettier to look at than that raised in any other way, the peculiar flavour it imparts to the bread renders it highly disagreeable to some persons. Another disadvantage is the difficulty of fermenting this barm in the winter season, as it

* "Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer."

requires a temperature which is very difficult to preserve in a Canadian winter day. Moreover, after the barm has once reached its height, unless immediately made use of, it sinks and rises no more; careful people, of course, who know this peculiarity, are on the watch, being aware of the ill consequences of heavy bread, or of having no bread but bannocks in the house. "Salt-rising" is made as follows:—For a small baking of two or three loaves, or one large bake-kettle-loaf (about the size of a London peck loaf) take about a pint of moderately warm water, and stir into the jug or pot containing it as much flour as will make a good batter, not too thick; add to this half a teaspoonful of salt, not more, and set the vessel in a pan of moderately warm water, within a little distance of the fire, or in the sun; the water that surrounds the pot in which the rising is must never be allowed to cool much below the original heat, more warm water being added (in the pan, not to the barm) till the whole is in an active state of fermentation, which will be from six to eight hours, when the dough must be mixed with it, and as much warm water or milk as you require. Knead the mass till it is tough and does not stick to the board. Make up your loaf or loaves, and keep them warmly covered near the fire till they rise; they must be baked directly this second rising takes place.

Those that bake what I term a *shanty loaf*, in an iron bake-pot or kettle, placed on the hot embers, set the dough to rise over a very few embers, or near the hot hearth, keeping the pot or pan turned as the loaf rises; when equally risen all over they put hot ashes beneath and on the lid, taking care not to let the heat be too fierce at first. As this is the most common method of baking and the first that a settler has practised, it is as well they should be made familiar with it beforehand. At first I was inclined to grumble and rebel against the expediency of bake-pans or bake-kettles, but as cooking ovens, iron stoves, and even brick and clay-built ovens will not start up at your bidding in the bush, these substitutes are valuable, and perform a number of uses. I have eaten excellent light bread, baked on the emigrant's hearth in one of these kettles. I have eaten boiled potatoes, baked meats, excellent stews, and good soups, all cooked at different times in this universally useful utensil; so let it not be despised. It is one of those things peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of settlers in the bush before they have collected those comforts about their homesteads, within and without, that are the rewards and the slow gleaning up of many years of toil.

There are several other sorts of rising similar to the salt-rising. "Milk-rising," which is mixed with

milk warm from the cow, and about a third warm water ; and " bran-rising," which is made with bran instead of flour, and is preferred by many persons to either of the former kinds.

Under Patsy's supervision Nellie soon became an adept in the manufacture of the different " risings," and was soon able to turn out an excellent loaf ; but she found there were many old country fashions to forget as well as many new ones to acquire. The management of the dairy was utterly different to what she had been accustomed, and to her mind rather cruel, and tended to produce stunted cattle. The calves were taken from the mother at their birth, and not allowed to suck at all. After being shut up fasting for a day and night they were allowed to suck Patsy's fingers, dipped into new milk, which dainty morsel the poor little things took to greedily. The plan has the advantage of saving a good deal of trouble, but it is dead against nature, and the cattle can never be as strong as if nourished by the mother. During the summer the cows were allowed to roam freely in the woods, and driven in early in the morning to be milked. A good deal of time was often wasted in looking for them, and sometimes they were absent without leave for a couple of days together, when they would return with distended udders, which caused them much injury. The kitchen refuse was always

spread out after breakfast to induce their attendance; but potato peelings and even green maize shoots failed to charm them into regular habits, and they had to be searched for two days out of three. Now all these little things, trivial as they seem on paper, are very trying to the temper, and if James had to exert his patience with the refractory oxen, none the less had Nellie need of hers with the delinquent "milky mothers"; but it was right good training for them both, and if Nellie needed any incentive to master a woman's duties in the bush in all its details, it was supplied by the knowledge that as soon as James was fairly settled and made comfortable on his own land, she was to become mistress of Grassmere. By his kindness and delicate attention Henry Hughes had won the Kentish maiden's heart, and never was woman's love bestowed on a worthier object than the stalwart Canadian, who, radiant with happiness, and anxious that every one around him should participate in his feelings, became so cheerful and worked so hard that even Silas Quidd was compelled to speak, and making Patsy his confidant, gave utterance to this memorable sentence: "Co-lumbus! ain't the boss just spry! looks as if he'd lost a dime* and happened on a dollar." Nellie was at

* An American coin, value ten cents, or one-tenth of the United States dollar.

first much horrified to see Patsy churning the milk instead of setting it, and making the butter from cream alone, but she had to acknowledge she was wrong, when she found that neither Micky nor his wife would touch fresh sweet milk, and made fearful inroads into the pork cask when deprived of their buttermilk and praties. The hogs also seemed to fancy the buttermilk most. But besides the dairy and bakery, there were numberless things new to her which she had to learn to become an accomplished Canadian housewife. The sugar-boiling was over for that year, but there was the management of the big wheel (Canadian spinning-wheel) to master; the art of dyeing the yarn before sending it to the mill to be made into cloth; the manufacture of candles and soap; the knitting of comforters, mittens, muffetees, and stockings, and the preparation of numberless articles of warm clothing before the setting in of the severe winter. By the above little list my lady readers will see that a backwoodsman's wife has plenty to keep her hands employed, and that her life is by no means a sinecure. The different methods of manufacturing these household necessities can be better and more readily learnt on arrival than by means of a book. Only practice and practical instruction will teach the big-wheel, and the same applies to the various dyes. After the sheep are shorn the

wool is picked clean, thoroughly washed and dried, and then packed off to the carding mill, where it is made ready for the wheel at the cost of about twopence per pound, or a certain percentage of the article itself to the carder. Now the deft fingers of the fair Penelopes come into action, and the clean white wool is converted into yarn, dyed, wound up, hanked, and then goes again to the mill, but this time to a weaver's, who turns it into strong durable cloth, either for about sixpence a yard, or on shares. It has one more mill to visit, the fulling mill, and is then ready for use, and right good useful lasting material it is.

The home-made candles of the settler are of two kinds, either "mould" or "dip," according to the fancy of the manufacturers. A mixture of hog and beef, or mutton and beef lards—in which the latter should be in the proportion of three to one—make the best candles. Tin moulds, turning out six candles at a time, can be purchased at any store, and through each of the tubes reeve a cotton wick, with a stick passed through the loops to prevent them falling. Melt your fat in a common pot, draw the wicks tight at the bottom to ensure their being in the centre of the tube, and pour the fat into the six tubes until they are full, and when hardened pull them out by the sticks, and the candles are made. Should they adhere to the

tubes, plunge the mould for a couple of seconds into hot water, and they will come out easily enough.

Soap is made from the lye obtained from wood ashes, mixed with grease, but it is rather a difficult operation, and can be best learned by watching a settler cunning in its manufacture. Under Patsy's instruction, Nellie learnt how to prepare apples for winter use, by peeling, coring, and stringing them up to the ceiling to dry; when required for use, they are boiled with sugar, and swell out to their original size. The preservation of fruit was accomplished by boiling the strawberries, raspberries, or whatever fruit it might be, with a little sugar, spreading them about half an inch thick on sheets of paper, which are placed out in the sun to dry. A few days does this, and the papers are then rolled up and hung in a dry place.

And now the crops having been sown, the men turned their attention to burning off the old stumps and the timber on the new strip that had been cleared by Micky and Silas during the winter. To effect this, the timber, which had been "logged up," or cut into convenient lengths, was drawn by the oxen into heaps, and there stowed as tightly and closely as possible; round these heaps were placed the smaller boughs, and on a fine dry day, with a favourable wind, they were fired. For days

the fires continued, the men carefully tending them, cutting in a straggling log with handspikes in one place, or adding fresh fuel in another. One of the great secrets in "logging" is to keep the heaps tightly stowed. A new hand would naturally think the more the air got to them to cause a draught, the better they would burn, but this is quite a mistake. The heaps should be formed round some huge log that is too heavy to move, and, after the oxen have drawn the others to the spot, they should be rolled with handspikes one on the top of the other, until they form a compact mass of seven or eight feet high, and a dozen feet broad. These fires present a very beautiful appearance at night; sometimes, when the ground is very dry, the whole fallow will be ablaze, until the dried sticks, leaves, chips, and other débris are consumed; and not unfrequently the settler's snake fences, and even his house itself, will fall victims to the devouring element. Some awful conflagrations have occurred in different parts of North America, notably one which took place on the River Miramichi, in New Brunswick, in the year 1825, when the whole of the forest on the north bank, and all the towns and villages within an extent of eighty-five miles long, and in some parts as much as twenty-five miles broad, were destroyed. Over 200 people perished in this dreadful visitation; treble that

number were severely burnt or injured by falling timber; and thousands were thrown on the charity of their fellow-settlers, having lost all they possessed, in some cases being unable even to distinguish the spot on which their homes had stood. The smoke and cinders of this fire were observed at Quebec, 250 miles distant, and even as far south as the Bermudas. The burnt district was composed almost entirely of pines, and, strange to say, these have been succeeded principally by poplar white birch, and maple.

After the heaps had been tended—no light work, let the reader rest assured—until they were reduced to ashes, which disagreeable and laborious occupation is termed “branding,” the erection of a fence became necessary. Some straight timber, which had been saved from the fire, was split into rails, and speedily built up into a zig-zag or snake fence, the projecting ends of which were kept in their places by cross pieces fixed in the ground. The wood in general use for this description of fence, when it is only intended to be temporary, is bass-wood, which lasts about eight years; but if the zig-zag is meant to remain for good, it should be formed of black or white ash, pine, cedar, and oak, when it will hold out a quarter of a century. In the settled districts, squared posts sunk in the ground, through which

is rove telegraph wire, have almost entirely superseded the clumsy snake fence, which was always liable to catch fire.

The large quantity of ashes that are left after so much wood has been consumed are generally spread over the fallow as manure ; but where the farmer has a convenient stream running through his property, and a market near at which to dispose of it, he makes potash. Henry Hughes, having both these requisites, always turned his ashes to account, selling the potash in Bison at about 25s. a cwt. Its manufacture is, like everything else when you know all about it, very simple, and is, briefly, as follows :—The ashes must be collected as free from all foreign matter as possible, and conveyed to the ashery, which is on the bank of a running stream. Barrels sawn across in the middle furnish tubs, which are provided with a false bottom perforated with holes, and supported upon cross sticks a little above the real bottom. Straw is laid upon the false bottom, under which is a cock for letting off the lye. The ashes, mixed with a little lime and common salt, are now placed in the tubs, and drenched with successive portions of water, which are allowed to remain for an hour or two. Those first drawn off, being saturated with the soluble salts, are conveyed directly to the evaporating pans ; but the succeeding portions being weak, are retained to use again

upon fresh ashes. The pans are of iron, broad and shallow, and with corrugated bottoms to increase the heated surface. When the liquor becomes of sufficient thickness, the heat is checked, and the contents of the pan soon solidify. When a sufficient quantity is got to fill a cask, it is fused at a red heat and poured into it. The mass when cold is coloured grey externally, but when broken shows a pinkish tint within. It is very deliquescent, and consequently the casks require to be nearly air-tight. An immense quantity is annually exported from Canada, the ease with which the materials are obtained giving an advantage to the colonial manufacturers which enables them to compete with the world.

"Mercy on us, James, what have you got there?" said Ellen, as her brother came into the house one evening, but accompanied by a stench so awful that they all rushed out of the room.

"Go outside!" shouted Henry, as he precipitately followed the others. "What in the world have you been doing?"

"Oh, I saw a weasel at Nellie's hen roost, and trying to catch it, it squirted something over me, so repulsive that I am nearly sick! What shall I do, Henry?"

"Go down to the creek at once, and sink all your clothes. Wait a moment, and I'll join you;" and

going into the house, he reappeared in a moment, saying—

“Here’s a piece of soap, Jim ; catch !” and he flung it towards him. “And you scrub away at yourself until I join you.”

“Why, what was it ?” asked Nellie, when, after about half-an-hour spent in copious ablutions, James re-entered the house.

“Well, Nellie,” replied Henry, “I think Jim will know better than to meddle with a *skunk** again.”

* The skunk (*Mephitis Mephitica*) is a beautiful little animal in appearance, but is the best known, and probably the most detested animal in Canada. Its prevailing colour is black, with a narrow line on the forehead, broad triangular patch on the nape, continuous with a narrow line on each side of the back, and tail-tuft white. It is nocturnal in its habits ; and commits great havoc amongst hens, chickens, and eggs. Though slow in its movements, it is effectually armed against the most ferocious enemy, by its power of ejecting an acrid and exceedingly offensive fluid. By a peculiar contraction of the muscles this can be discharged to a distance of fourteen feet with great precision. It is always necessary to destroy clothes impregnated with it, and a dog that has been touched by it remains a nuisance for months.

CHAPTER IV.

“MIND your helm now,” roared the captain through his speaking trumpet, clinging on to a belaying pin himself; and scarcely had the words left his lips when the angry sea curling over the taffrail hurled its bulk on the poop of the staggering ship, and carrying away cabin-doors and bulkheads as if they were so much paper, poured its waters knee-deep along the entire length of the vessel, causing the weary men at the pumps to relax their efforts and stare each other despairingly in the face, as the overburthened ship rose sluggishly and heavily to the next swell, the water streaming from her scuppers in miniature cascades. The screams and cries of the affrighted women arose from between decks, sounding muffled and hollow through the battened down hatches.

“She’s gaining on the pumps, sir,” reported the mate, who, creeping along the rail, had reached the captain.

“God help us then,” said the latter, “unless the other pump can be repaired.”

“That young fellow Fletcher is doing his best,” replied the mate, “but I’ll go down and see.”

The “Happy Land” was in one of the terrible cyclones that from time to time sweep down from the Indian Ocean to the neighbourhood of the Cape, carrying in their wake death and destruction. Thanks to the great progress made of late years, the theory of storms is now generally known, and the careful mariner is enabled, if not to elude them, at all events to place his ship in the most favourable position to encounter their fury. Leaving England with over three hundred emigrants on board, amongst whom was George Fletcher, all went well and prosperously with the “Happy Land” until she had rounded the Cape of Good Hope, when she had fallen in with the hurricane, against which she was now feebly battling. But then the faults which had escaped notice during the calm weather became palpably evident. The rotten canvas, rent from the bolt ropes at the first fury of the blast, was driven in a cloudy mass to leeward, and becoming unmanageable the ship broached to, the mizen-mast and maintop-mast going over the side in the process; and not the spars alone, but out of the scant crew two of the best hands, ever the first to go, because ever foremost at the post of danger, were hurled with the wreck to leeward and seen no more, even the cry

for help lost in the roaring of the tempest, while the boatswain, jammed against the netting by the falling mass, would be a cripple for life, even if that life were spared.

It is not my intention to enter into a detailed account of a ship in a gale of wind ; such an event has been too often and too well described for me to attempt it. By sheer good seamanship the vessel was cleared of the drifting spars, which threatened to knock a hole in her crazy old side, and got before the wind ; and now the carpenter on sounding the well had found more than three feet of water, which was increasing hourly. Hands there were in plenty, and willing hands, but what could poor Giles fresh from the plough do on deck ? why, with all his wish to assist he was useless, worse than useless, for he could not keep his legs, and was in the way ; but he could pump, and pump he did cheerfully and willingly, gang after gang of tired men succeeding each other at the monotonous task, and by unremitting exertion preventing the water from gaining on them. Thus two days had passed, and the gale showed no sign of abating.

Between decks was a scene such as I trust in God's mercy you, reader, will never be called upon to witness. Silent agony, boisterous peals of despairing laughter, the petition for mercy, and the frenzied blasphemer's hideous appeal, mingled to-

gether in the stifling atmosphere of the main deck, where no air could penetrate, save in the few seconds when the after companion hatch was opened to send forth a fresh gang of pumpers and to receive the wearied men thus relieved. If you wish to read of such cases, and to know how Englishmen and women, ay, and English children, conduct themselves in such circumstances, turn back to the wrecks of the "London," "Birkenhead," and "Royal Charter," and you will there find that which shall make you proud of your countrymen, though your heart were harder than the nether millstone; and if, reader, you would know *why* such things happen, turn to a recently published book, and you shall see for yourself how the great majority of losses at sea are brought about by the rapacity and greed of unscrupulous owners, and how, when all other classes of society are protected by the law, our poor sailors, unthought of and uncared for, are yearly sent to the bottom of the ocean, not by hundreds, that would be bad enough, but literally by thousands!

Thus it was with the "Happy Land"; had the necessary repairs been perfected instead of being only done sufficiently to pass muster at the inspection of the Board of Trade, her old sides would not have gaped asunder directly bad weather overtook her. Had the owners expended a few pounds in

new standing rigging, the masts had never gone over the side, drowning two gallant men, and jeopardising the lives of all on board.

But suddenly there was a stoppage at one of the pumps, and the grinding of the chain ceased to clank, clank in its never-ending revolution.

"Heave round, my lads," cried the mate, "no time for spelling now.

Little use in heaving round now, for the pump, neglected and crazy from disuse, has broken ; and unless it can be repaired their doom is sealed, for the remaining one is totally insufficient to keep the water under, and no boat could live, even could it be launched in such a sea.

"Go down and see if there is a blacksmith, or any one who understands this kind of thing, amongst the passengers," said the captain to the mate, for the carpenter of the ship had confessed the disaster was beyond his skill to remedy.

George Fletcher had come off work at the pump some hours before, and, wearied out, had thrown himself down on a chest to snatch a few minutes' uneasy sleep, when he was woke by a lantern shining in his face, and the mate's voice saying, "Here, rouse up, my lad ! do you know anything about pumps, for one of ours has got a little out of order ?"

George accompanied him on deck ; and now the

old experience picked up at Rochester came into play. At the end of a couple of hours, by a little work and a great deal of ingenuity, the damage was repaired and the clanking of the chain again heard, as the men turned to with a will, cheered by a little gleam of sunshine that for a moment had shot athwart the murky sky, and the welcome report of the captain that the barometer was rising. From that hour the weather moderated, and by the next morning the sea had gone down enough to enable them to take off the hatches and give a little ventilation to the crowded main deck. But, alas, how shorn of her glories was the "Happy Land"! The saloon cabin bulkheads all washed away, and the furniture floating many a league astern on the treacherous waves; the stump of the mizen-mast standing up splintered and grim; the ropes that were wont to look so taut and trim hanging down in helpless bights, like overloaded clothes lines on a village common; but by the mercy of Providence their lives were spared, hope looked them once more in the face, and under the directions of the captain and the mates, a jury mizen-main was got up, as much of the leak as was come-at-able was stopped up, and by sundown the battered old craft was again heading for the southern part of Tasmania.

"So your name is George Fletcher, is it?" said

the captain, when our hero had laid by his adze a few minutes, for he was assisting the carpenter in the repairs. "Well, George Fletcher, do you know we owe our lives to you? Yes, ladies and gentlemen," he said, turning to some of the saloon passengers who were standing by, "I don't mind telling you now, that if this young man had not shown the skill he did, under most disheartening circumstances, and patched up that rotten old pump, we shouldn't be standing here now to talk about it. You may depend on my reporting it fully to the agents and to the owners, and you may count on me as a friend."

The "Happy Land" crawled along under her reduced sail, until near Tasmania, with the heavens so beautifully clear that it seemed impossible to believe that the angry sky they had quitted had any affinity with the tranquil azure now over head. Here she fell in with a Hobart Town steamer, which took her in tow; and a few days afterwards, her troubles and dangers over for the present, she lay secured, moored alongside the Circular Quay at Sydney. As a harbour, Sydney stands simply without a rival in the world. From the sea the high cliffs look bleak, barren, and inhospitable, and no traces of a haven are visible at first, so that it appears to the stranger as though the ship were heading on to destruction against the cruel rocks.

But presently as the vessel advances an opening is seen, with a perpendicular headland on either side, and passing between these the beholder finds bay after bay stretching far away to right, to left, and in front ; the water smooth as a millpond after the swell to which he has been subjected for the last three months ; and the scene enlivened by numbers of small passenger steamers and boats of every kind. In this noble port there is no need of boats to land the emigrants, the water admits of the largest vessels going straight to the quay ; and as there was no sickness on board to render detention necessary, the " Happy Land " went direct to her place at the wharf, and in a few minutes the whole of her passengers were once more on dry land, and in the new country of their adoption, which at one time it seemed so unlikely they would ever reach.

George was going to look out for a boarding-house to which he might send his traps until he decided on his future, when he was summoned to the captain's presence, whom he found talking to a gentleman on the poop.

" This is the young fellow, Mr. Lyon, that mended the pump I was talking about, and saved all our lives."

The shipowner—for he was one of the partners in the great firm running vessels to all parts of the

world—spoke very kindly to George, asked him many questions as to how he had been hitherto employed, where he thought of going, and if anybody out there knew him, and concluded by recommending him to remain on board the ship for a few days, during which he would make inquiry as to the best opening presenting itself to a young man in his position. “Of course,” he added, “your expenses on board will be nothing, for you’ll see, Captain Futtock, to his getting his food.”

“Ay, that I will, and welcome,” replied the skipper; and so George, relieved of all anxiety, remained in the vessel, messing with his old ally the carpenter, and immensely enjoying the beautiful walks in the neighbourhood of the town after the confinement of the lengthy passage.

Sydney, the capital of New South Wales, stands upon a promontory, with Darling Harbour to the west, and upon undulating ground extending south and east; thus to the north and north-east it possesses water frontage. With its large population, and the scattered houses that of late years it has absorbed, it is hard to tell where the town itself ends and the suburbs commence. Whether viewed from the harbour or from the adjoining heights, it has a most imposing appearance; and the surrounding shores and innumerable bays and rocky promontories of Port Jackson present scenery not

to be surpassed in any part of the world. The streets are broad and well laid out, particularly the two largest, Pitt and George Streets, which, with their numberless hansom cabs, omnibuses, and private equipages, bring back forcibly to the newcomer the far-away joys of Regent Street and Pall Mall. Most of the houses are built of the sandstone on which the town stands, and present a solid and substantial appearance, whilst in many cases the architect has been by no means unmindful of the decorative portion of his art. The chief thoroughfares are well paved and lighted with gas, and the drainage is good, having cost the municipality nearly half a million to accomplish it thoroughly. The water supply is abundant and pure, being conducted to the city from swamps in the neighbourhood of Botany Bay. Sydney boasts of a very excellent university ; the building itself is the finest in Australia, having a façade 500 feet in length, and flanked at its western end by a hall, the proportions of which are such that, were it in England, it would rank third in point of size. Government House also is beautifully situated among well-wooded grounds overlooking the harbour, while the Botanical Gardens, Hyde Park, and the Domain, offer a variety of charming lounges to the inhabitants. The neighbourhood of Sydney, with every nook in the adjacent bays, is studded

with villas and snug cottages, surrounded by park-like grounds and gardens of orange-trees, bananas, and numberless semi-tropical plants, unfamiliar to the English eye of George.

On the second day after their arrival, as it happened to be Sunday and the carpenter was disengaged, he and George visited the boatswain, who had been removed to the hospital immediately on the arrival of the ship. Poor fellow, he was sinking fast, and died during the night, to the great grief of his old comrade the carpenter, whose indignation against the people in England, whose duty it was to have removed the worn-out rigging which caused the accident, knew no bounds.

At the expiration of a week Mr. Lyon sent for George, and said he thought he had heard of an opening which would suit him.

"That is, if you do not mind heat," he added. "A friend of mine is about to establish a sugar plantation near Brisbane, and there will be a great deal of blacksmith's and wheelwright's work on the plantation itself; and as that industry is likely to become of great importance to Queensland, I do not think you can do better than to embrace the offer. The wages you will find liberal; and if, at the expiration of a year, you think you would like a change, write to me, and I will see what can be done. I might have got you a place in a ship-

wright's yard here, but you would not be nearly so likely to get on as in the broader field offered in a new and rising colony. Your passage will be found in the next steamer, sailing to-morrow, and at Brisbane some conveyance will be in readiness to take you and your traps to the plantation. In the name of the passengers of the 'Happy Land,' I have much pleasure in handing you this cheque for £50; and now good-bye, and good luck attend you. Don't be late for the steamer; she leaves A. S. U. & Co.'s Wharf at noon to-morrow."

On the ocean again; but this time in a smart steamer, widely different from the wave-worn craft in which George had so lately entered Sydney Harbour. The vessel headed northward for Moreton Bay, a passage which took forty-eight hours to accomplish. His fellow-passengers were a motley crew, most of them diggers, on their way to some of the numerous rushes with which Queensland always abounds; rough-looking fellows many of them, careless in their attire, "bearded like the pard," and speaking a strange and almost unintelligible language, in which such phrases as "jumping claims," "miners' rights," "striking bottom," "duffers," and "shicers," were of constant occurrence, leaving the unenlightened listener as much in the dark with regard to their meaning as though a foreign language were being spoken around him.

Daylight on the third morning found them in Moreton Bay, and crossing the bar and steaming up the Brisbane River with its ugly mud flats, low mangrove-lined banks, and tortuous channel, they arrived at the wharf by noon. Though the river itself below the city is hideous, yet by the time Brisbane is reached, the mangroves have died out, the banks become lofty and wooded, and when on rounding Kangaroo Point the tongue of land on which the capital of Queensland is situated comes in view, the spectator can hardly fail to be struck with the picturesque spot that the inhabitants of the young colony have selected for their chief city. Truly Brisbane presents a most inviting aspect to the new-comer. The absence of trees, so conspicuous in the grander and more rugged scenery of Port Jackson, is unknown here, and far back in the rear of the town rise ridges timbered to their crests. Lining the river banks are well-built villas, each standing in its own plot of land, amidst waving plantains, fragrant oranges, and the feathery sprays of the graceful Indian bamboo. The whole place is rich with vegetation, and the sun reminded George that he had advanced five hundred miles further towards its fervid realm. On landing, the town is a little disappointing, for, although the streets are wide and laid out at right angles with each other, the want of uniformity in the houses is

a great eyesore. A mean little wooden hovel is found nestling by the side of a fine new stone-built warehouse, and the contrast between such unequal neighbours sets at nought all pretensions to architectural beauty.*

George called on the agent, as he had been directed, who told him that a horse-dray would start for "Bendemeer" on the following day, and would call at the wharf for his luggage if he would have it ready. He himself was to remain in town until Mr. Dawson's arrival, when terms could be settled and an agreement drawn up. Two days after Mr. Dawson, the owner of Bendemeer Plantation, rode in, and George entered into his employ for twelve months, at the rate of fifty shillings a-week and all found. He took a great fancy to his master, who was quite a young man, careless and easy in his manners, and such a one as it would seem impossible for any one to quarrel with. A horse was provided for George, and the next morning he and Mr. Dawson started for Bendemeer. The first few miles of the road lay through partially cleared country, with farms on either side, railed off from each other by hard-wood fences. These are quite unlike the snake fences of Canada.

* Since the time of which I am now speaking, several timely fires have cleared away the wretched humpies (wooden cottages) that formerly disfigured Brisbane, but no attempt at uniformity has yet been made.

Posts and rails are "run out," as it is technically expressed, from an iron bark, or some other hard-wood tree, the posts morticed with two or three holes, according to the number of rails of which the fence is to consist; these are sunk firmly into the ground and the rails inserted into the holes, slightly overlapping each other; they are by no means picturesque, but still are far less unsightly than the "snake fence" of North America.

As they went on, the homesteads became fewer and fewer, and soon the last slab hut had been left behind, and George found himself for the first time in the "bush." By the term "bush" is meant the country in its original condition, unimproved by clearing, in fact, exactly as nature has left it. One of the most striking peculiarities of Australia is the great *sameness* that is to be found throughout the vast continent. Having travelled twenty miles in the interior of any one of the colonies, the stranger is as well informed with regard to the leading features of the country as if he had wandered over a dozen districts. The bush may be generally described as open timbered land, devoid of undergrowth, and intersected by many watercourses, called creeks. Because they are called "creeks" the reader must not take for granted that they are full of water; frequently they are dry for months together, and the thirsty traveller may ride for the

whole day without being able to wet his parched lips. When the open timbered country disappears and dense matted foliage takes its place—as is generally the case by the banks of the rivers and permanent creeks—it is called “scrub.” Sometimes these scrubs extend for miles and miles, their dismal recesses unpenetrated except by the natives, and affording a secure lurking-place for wild dogs and stray cattle. I have seen them so dense that if you thrust your arm out in any direction you could not see your hand, and fancy what it is to lose yourself in one!*

The blacks, by some unknown instinct they are themselves unable to explain, can traverse most of them; but I remember a poor fellow straying off the road into the great Leichhardt Scrub, near Rockhampton, whilst off his head from sunstroke, and after the black troopers had followed his track for some distance into the hideous solitude, they returned affrighted; nothing would induce them to prosecute the search, and poor J——’s skeleton is bleaching in that impenetrable jungle at the present moment. Along the banks of the Brisbane river, belts of scrub running down to the water’s edge, and extending from fifty to a hundred and fifty yards backwards, are common,

* This is a fact that I can from personal experience vouch for. Should any one doubt it, let them attempt to penetrate the jungle in the Kennedy District of Queensland.—C. H. E.

and such strips are greatly sought after by settlers, for the ground, when once cleared, is surprisingly rich, fat with the mouldering and decayed vegetation of centuries, and will bring forth crop after crop in rapid succession without need of manure. But the task of clearing such land is very arduous, and where the settler has only his own arm to rely upon the operation is terribly lengthy. If a man has capital enough to enable him to hire a gang of labourers and turn them into his patch of scrub with axe, tomahawk, and pick, no doubt the result will amply repay him for his outlay ; but the poor man is unable to do this. By dint of hard work he clears away a site for his bark humpy,* and a few square yards to grow sweet potatoes, maize, and arrowroot, and after a time, wearied and conquered by the stubborn thicket, he hires out his labour and neglects all further attempts to clear ; or sells the land to his richer neighbour for a mere song, and ever after looks back with regret to so many valuable years wasted.

Australia differs from all other known places in many respects besides the sameness of its scenery. Its indigenous vegetation—nine-tenths of which belong to the *eucalypti* and *acacias*—is unique in its peculiar manner of spreading out its leaves, which hang down sideways, so as to deprive the traveller

* Wooden or bark cottage.

of even shelter from the scorching rays of the sun. The stones of the native cherry grow outside the fruit, and the trees never shed their leaves, but cast their bark every year in preference. Under the head of *eucalypti* are included the various species of gums so useful to the settler. The wood is very close and hard, and the foliage of a dull green, not dense but very gloomy. The three most common varieties are the white, blue, and red gums, all of which attain an immense size, one hundred and fifty feet in length and forty in girth being far from uncommon. All the gums are enlisted into the service of the colonist. From some he obtains the enormous sheets of bark that roof his bush residence; others he fells, and splits for fencing purposes, or choosing a tree straight in the grain "runs out" with beetle and wedges the slabs of which the sides of his hut are built, and the shingles with which he sometimes prefers to cover the roof. The *acacias* or wattle-trees are another numerous and wide-spread class, and are found of all sizes from a shrub to a large tree. The *Acacia fragrans* possesses the most exquisite odour, while another variety makes the bush lovely as the golden gorse in England. Cedar-trees of large dimensions are found in the vicinity of Moreton Bay, and the obtaining and shipping of these employs a good number of hands. But besides the useful timber I

have mentioned, there is one terrible plague that every new settler in Queensland would do well to become acquainted with as soon after his arrival as possible, not for any use that it will be to him, but that he may learn to keep himself clear of it; I mean the stinging-nettle tree, which attains a great height, and the intensity of whose poison is so violent that the man or horse unlucky enough to be brought into a prolonged contact with its branches is stricken with a numbness resembling paralysis, and accompanied by acute pain, the effects of which last for months; and although I have never known a case fatal to a human being, I have seen more than one horse killed by its sting. Strange to say it does not appear to hurt cattle, for I have seen them dash through a belt of timber full of nettle trees without the slightest injury, whilst we were afraid to follow; and I remember, in the instance I mention, we lost our beef-steak that night in consequence.*

But in speaking of these trees I have strayed away from the other points in which Australia is dissimilar from all known countries. Chiefly remarkable is the absence of all wild and ferocious quadrupeds, the only carnivorous animal known being the dingo or native dog, which I should hardly be inclined to call indigenous, as most likely

* This curious anomaly is well known to all bushmen.—C. H. E.

it was brought over from New Guinea with the people who first populated the continent, and who, it seems reasonable to suppose, came from there. That mighty graminivorous animals at one time roamed over the wilds of Australia seems undoubted, for the fossil remains of an elephant have been discovered there; but so have the bones of mighty kangaroos, fellows standing a dozen feet high, and able to clear fifty feet at a bound, so it seems as if nature was always inclined to little eccentricities in that quarter of the globe. The Australian swan is black; the magpie is the most melodious of its birds; and one anomaly it can boast of (*Ornithorhynchus paradoxus*) is the platypus, which has a mouth externally like a duck's bill, the body of a big rat, and loves the water like a fish, forming altogether what would be called at sea "a most remarkable *lash-up*." Some of the Australian mammals, under which head are included kangaroos, opossums, &c., are like those of America, from the curious purse or bag in which the young are carried, and from this the class derives its name of "*Marsupialia*," or animals with pouches. Kangaroos, of which there are nearly thirty varieties, are so well known that I need not tire my readers by describing them. Any Englishman can now become as well acquainted with them as if he had visited the antipodes, thanks to the Zoological

Gardens and the Meat Preserving Companies. After watching at the Regent's Park how the animal makes use of its tail in the flying leaps which are its means of progression, he can return home, and, deftly opening the tin, can have the facsimile of the tail he has just left for his dinner, and I sincerely trust he may like it better than I do; but it was not always curiosity which compelled me to eat it.

But Mr. Dawson and George have arrived at Bendemeer, the latter looking rather askance at a chair after so many hours on horseback, and in the next chapter I will endeavour to give the reader some idea of a Queensland sugar plantation.

CHAPTER V.

ON getting up on the following morning, George was taken round the plantation by Mr. Dawson, who was justly proud of the success which had attended the introduction of the growth of sugar into Australia, a result mainly owing to the vigour and perseverance with which he had carried on his operations, despite of the adverse criticisms and prophecies of speedy ruin freely indulged in by his best friends. Bendemeer was a tract of country of 1,280 acres, or two square miles, situated at the confluence of a creek with the Royal River, which emptied itself into the north part of Moreton Bay, and was navigable for boats and barges as far as the plantation, thus gaining for its owner the great desideratum of water carriage. Mr. Dawson lived in a neat-looking three-roomed house, built of slabs, with shingled roof, and about a quarter of a mile off, in the angle formed by the junction of the creek and the Royal, stood the *works*, under which name was comprised the crushing machinery, the huts for the white men and coolies, the forge and wheelwright's shop, and various other small build-

ings, such as tool-houses, &c. The spot on which the works stood had been only three years before occupied by the dense scrub described in the last chapter, and which had also entirely shut out the river bank ; now, however, it was all cleared away, beautiful arable land reigned in its stead, and only small patches at either extremity of the plantation denoted that rank, noxious vegetation had once usurped the space now smiling with waving cane. The largest building was of course the galvanised iron-covered shed containing the costly crushing machinery, with its complicated, centrifugal apparatus, vacuum pans, &c., with a detailed account of which I will not trouble the reader ; but as the production of sugar is becoming of as great importance in semi-tropical Australia as the growth of wool, I shall, thinking it may be useful, explain the process of preparing the land and trace the plantation from its virgin wildness to the moment when it has yielded its gratified owner its first hogshead of sugar and its maiden quarter cask of rum.

This is how Bendemeer was formed :—First the land was purchased from the Colonial Government by Mr. Dawson, whose next step was to hire a strong gang of hands, and set them to work clearing away the scrub and timber, while other men were building the works. One advantage pos-

sessed by the ground was that it sloped gradually towards the river, thus rendering drainage a comparatively easy task ; and this consideration, added to the benefit derived from good water carriage, more than compensated for the time taken up and the expense incurred in clearing. In the meanwhile the machinery had been ordered from England, good seed cane obtained from the Mauritius and the West Indies, the ground had been ploughed and reploughed, the garden formed, paddocks, stock-yard, &c., fenced off, and forty coolies had arrived from the South Sea Islands. And now the whole thing is in working order. One crushing has been held with most favourable results, and despite the forebodings of croakers it has been satisfactorily proved that the climate of certain portions of Australia *is* adapted to the successful cultivation of sugar. Having thus in a few words explained the method of preparing the ground for its reception, let us turn to the cane itself, for I dare say many of my readers have never seen it in any other form than that of "white loaf" or "best brown."

The plant (*Arundo saccharifera*) belongs to the natural order of *gramineæ*, or grasses, and grows in a succession of joints from four to twenty feet high, and the stem is from one to two inches in diameter ; long slender leaves shoot forth from the

opposite sides of alternate joints, and fall off when the plant comes to maturity. When it is eleven or twelve months old there appears from the top a sprout called the arrow, which grows to the length of seven or eight feet, without joints, terminating in an ample panicle about two feet long, with numerous white flowers. Such is the way the cane would grow if left to itself, but the planter never allows the arrow to show its nose, for before it is due the cane has been cut and crushed. Seeds are rarely produced by the cultivated canes, and the plant is never raised from these, but always from the cuttings of the stalk. The stem is straight and smooth, the joints three to six inches apart, according to the variety, the outer coating hard, and when ripe of various shades of yellow, violet, green, and red. Between the joints the cane is filled with a whitish spongy tissue, which under the magnifying glass is seen to consist of numberless cells containing the saccharine juice. The varieties chiefly in use in Queensland are the "ribbon or Batavian," and the "Bourbon," the former of which thrives admirably and is remarkably hardy.

Having ploughed the land into furrows about four feet apart, you place in these the cuttings, each of which is a foot or eighteen inches long, and containing several joints. As an average

cane when cut for the mill is about seven feet long, the reader will see that the cuttings alone absorb an immense quantity, but luckily they do not require to be renewed every year, as he will see further on. These cuttings are prepared by the coolies, who chop them into the required length on a block with a billhook—or if the Mexican weapon, half sword, half knife, called a “machet,” can be got, so much the better—and are placed in the furrows three feet apart, in a diagonal or slanting position, not stuck down straight, and the lower part lightly covered with earth. In a very few days they begin to throw shoots upwards and roots downwards, and if the weather is favourable a month will see the field, in which they have been planted, green. As they rise, the earth is drawn round the roots, the ground between the rows carefully hoed, and kept free from the fast-springing weeds, while the leaves are stripped from the joints to throw all the vigour and sap into the stalk itself, instead of permitting it to nurture useless leaves. This last operation is termed “trashing,” and is very laborious work, as it has to be performed under the blazing sun, which, in the height of summer, when it is most needful, strikes down far too fiercely for any European to face it without risk of sunstroke. Another danger attendant on trashing is snake-bite. Climbing whip

snakes are very plentiful in Queensland, and from their colour are unseen upon the cane, so when the coolie stretches out his hand carelessly to grasp a leaf, he sometimes encloses one of these venomous little reptiles, and is very lucky if he escapes without being bitten.

As soon as the canes arrive at maturity, which is in seven or eight months from the time of planting, they are cut off close to the ground—the closer the better, for the richest juice is found in the lower joints—are stripped of the tops and leaves, cut into yard lengths for convenience, and carted to the mill. The ripeness of the cane is indicated by the skin becoming dry, smooth, and brittle; by the cane becoming heavy, the pith grey, approaching to brown, and the juice sweet and glutinous. When the cane has been removed, the root or “stool” is still in the ground, and instead of ploughing this up and planting new cuttings the following year, it is allowed to remain, and by-and-by it sends out a fresh shoot, called a ratoon, which, though not so large and vigorous as its predecessor, affords better juice, which is with less trouble converted into sugar. Thus one cutting lasts for three years, but in place of putting in all new plants at one time it is usually so managed that one-third the estate is renewed yearly, so that two-thirds of the crop consists of ratoon-cane and one-third of “plant-

cane," as the stalk obtained direct from the cutting is called. The tops and leaves stripped off when the crop is cut is left lying between the rows, and is either burnt off when dry, or ploughed in; and the latter is by far the best plan where the rows are far enough apart to admit of working a plough between them, for by this means some portion of the nourishment which has been drawn from the earth is restored to it, and sugar is a very exhaustive crop. The green tops if collected form very fattening fodder for horses and cattle, but in Queensland this is hardly requisite.

As soon as the canes are cut they are taken to the mill. If left they are liable to ferment in the warm climate and thus lose a portion of their sugar; indeed, it is best so to adjust the operation of cutting the cane as to keep pace with the action of the mill by which the juice is to be pressed out, so that the canes may be crushed while quite fresh. The crushing machinery it is not necessary for me to describe, indeed I much doubt if any explanation I could give would be successful in placing the various portions before the reader's eye. The *crushing* part of it consists of three heavy cast-iron rollers, arranged in a triangular form, between which the canes are passed. They revolve horizontally, one, called the top roller, over the two others, one of which is called the feed-roller and

the other the delivery roller. These are mounted in an iron framing, resting upon a massive foundation of masonry, and having the necessary provisions for adjusting their relative positions. The two lower rollers have small flanges at their ends, between which the top roller is placed so that the pressed canes or *megass* may not be able to escape and clog the machinery. The rollers are made from two inches and a quarter to two inches and a half thick, twenty-four inches in diameter, and are generally fluted—those at Bendemeer were fluted in a diagonal direction—to enable them the better to seize the canes from the feed-board, which is an inclined plane, commonly of cast-iron, the edge of which is nearly in contact with the feeding roller. The space between the feeding roller and the top roller is about half an inch ; but the space between the latter and the delivering roller is much less. The delivering board, which receives and conducts away the “*trash*” of the cane, is also of cast-iron, sloping downwards from the delivering roller, with which its edge is in close contact, so that it may detach any portions of trash or megass that may adhere to the delivering roller, and which if not detached would become mixed with the expressed liquor. The rollers are set in motion by toothed gear, and suitable channels and receptacles are provided for receiving and carrying away the

cane-juice. Mr. Dawson's engine was of ten-horse power, and expressed a thousand gallons per hour, or about one hundred gallons for each horse power.

Cane-juice, as it appears when first extracted, is of a dull grey colour, and very sweet to the taste, but as in a climate so hot as Queensland it would ferment if left standing for even an hour, it is necessary to commence the clarifying process at once. So, now, if the reader will be good enough to follow me, having planted, grown, cut, and crushed our canes, we will proceed to turn the juice into sugar.

The liquor is conducted by gutters from the mill to two large flat-bottomed coppers or oven-pans, called *clarifiers*, containing 400 gallons each. Each of these clarifiers is built into brick-work over a fire, which may be regulated or extinguished by a damper; and each is supplied with a stop-cock for drawing off the liquor. When the clarifier is filled with juice, a little slaked lime is added to it; the lime, which is called *temper*, having been previously mixed with cane-juice to the consistence of cream. Great care is requisite in the use of this, and the same proportion that was found perfect last year is by no means certain to answer this, as the quantity to be used depends in a measure upon the nature of the soil; an over-dose may, however, always be corrected by a little alum-water. As the

liquor in the clarifier becomes hot, the solid portions of the cane-juice coagulate, and are thrown up in the form of scum. The heat should be urged nearly to boiling, but it should never actually attain that point. The proper heat is indicated by the scum rising in blisters and breaking into white froth, which generally happens about three-quarters of an hour after the fire is lighted. The damper is then closed and the fire dies out; and after an hour's repose the liquor is ready for removal to the first of the evaporating pans. It is drawn off by the stop-cock in such a manner as to avoid disturbing the scum, which subsides unbroken and is removed from the clarifier before another charge of cane-juice is put in. The clarified liquor is a bright clear yellow, much resembling sherry.

It now goes to the largest of three evaporating pans or coppers to have its bulk further reduced by boiling. The largest of these is of sufficient size to receive the whole contents of the clarifier, but the others become smaller, on account of the diminished bulk of the liquor by evaporation as it is removed into each of them in succession. These evaporators are placed over a long flue, heated by a fire at one end, over which the smallest of the coppers, called the *teache*, is placed. In the process of boiling, impurities are thrown up in the form of scum, which is carefully removed; and

sometimes that from the smaller pans is allowed to return, by a channel provided for the purpose, into the largest pan or *grand copper*, but this is only necessary when the juice is very impure. If, during the evaporation, it be perceived that the liquor is not sufficiently clear, some lime-water is added to it for the same purpose as the temper was originally applied to the juice in the clarifier. In the least or smallest of the evaporating coppers, called the *teache*, the liquor is boiled down to as thick a consistency as is considered necessary for granulation; and this point is ascertained by observing to what length a thread of the thick syrup may be drawn between the finger and thumb. For this purpose a drop of the syrup is taken and drawn into a thread until it snaps asunder. When it has done so, the portion suspended from the finger shrinks up, so as to remain at a greater or less length according to the degree to which it has been evaporated; the proper state is indicated by a thread of from half an inch to a quarter of an inch long, and this is the origin of the name *teache*, or trial by touch.

When the syrup has been thus ascertained to be sufficiently concentrated, it is ladled or "*skipped*" into a large cylindrical cooler, about six feet wide and two feet deep, from which it is afterwards transferred to smaller coolers, or rather crystallising or granulating vessels, of which there are six, formed

of wood, in a square shape, of five feet by one in depth. The large mass of sugar in each cooler is favourable to the production of large crystals, because it occasions the syrup to cool very slowly, without which the grains would not be coarse. In the last-mentioned vessels, in the course of about twenty-four hours, the sugar is brought to the state of a soft mass of crystals, imbedded in molasses or thick uncrystallisable treacle. The separation of this fluid is the next part of the process, and is performed in a building called the *curing-house*. This is a large building, the floor being excavated to form the molasses reservoir, which is lined with cement. Over this cistern is an open framing of joists, upon which stand a number of empty casks and sugar hogsheads, called *potting casks*. Each of these has eight or ten holes bored through the lower end, and in each hole is placed the stalk of a plantain leaf, which is long enough to descend a few inches below the level of the joists and to rise above the top of the cask. The soft concrete sugar is removed from the coolers into these casks, in which the molasses gradually drain from the crystalline portion, percolating through the spongy plantain stalks, which act as so many drains to convey the liquid to the cistern beneath. With sugar of average quality three or four weeks is sufficient for this purpose, but some-

times much longer is necessary ; and Mr. Dawson told George that last year his sugar was over seven weeks in the potting casks, and the drainage was hardly exhausted even then. When it left the curing-house the sugar was packed for shipment in hogsheads, and sold as *raw, brown, or muscovado sugar*, or sent to the refiners to be turned into the hard white substance known as *loaf-sugar*.

And now, reader, you have had as good an account of its manufacture as I can give you in a short space ; but before dismissing the sugar I must say a few words about the making of rum, which was carried on at Bendemeer at the same time. But little description will be necessary, for the process exactly resembles the distillation of any spirit in England, where there is no difficulty in either getting it or finding out how it is made. The scum from the evaporating pans mixed with molasses, refuse juice, and the spirit-wash or lees of former distillations (known as "dunder"), makes the best rum. A peculiar volatile oil comes to the surface in the first part of the process, which imparts to the rum its peculiar flavour. The fermentation is continued upon large quantities of the material for from nine to fourteen days at a time according to its strength. When it has attained its maximum degree of attenuation, it is pumped up as soon as possible into the stills and worked off at a properly-regulated

heat. Great cleanliness is necessary in all vessels employed, and when I add that the colouring is given by molasses or caramel, I think I have said all that is needful with regard to that portion of a sugar-planter's business.

George had two companions in his hut, the engineer and the overseer. The dwellings on an Australian plantation or sheep-run are no great things to look at, for they present an unfinished, tumble-down appearance, though in reality they are exceedingly comfortable. It is true that, lying in your bunk, you can get a very fair view of the surrounding country through the chinks in the slabs, and if it is blowing and raining, perhaps a little water is driven over you ; but these are minor drawbacks in a country where the heat is so great that every breath of fresh air is welcomed. The forge and wheelwright's shop were under an airy shed, and one coolie was told off to blow the bellows, while extra help could always be got by applying to the overseer. Perhaps the reader will wonder what work there could be on a plantation to require the permanent services of a mechanic such as George ; and although I cannot enumerate the different jobs performed daily, I can answer for this, that he was never idle. Tires of wheels required cutting and shutting, the bullock-driver brings his dray to grief, ploughs are always getting

knocked out of time, horses must be shod, and a variety of little wants are always turning up, far too numerous to mention. Now Bendemeer not being in the neighbourhood of a coal-mine, all forge work had to be done with charcoal, and the proper manufacture of this was a sore trial to George. There are few things that require greater skill and care to turn out satisfactorily than good charcoal, and for the smithy it ought to be the very best. Luckily, George's bellows-blower had helped the last blacksmith to manufacture it, so, with his assistance, he managed to keep up the supply ; though, from lack of skill, the heap often turned into ashes. However, by practice, he got into the knack of making it ; and as it may prove useful to the emigrant I shall explain how it is done.

In the two countries with which we now have to do, Canada and Australia, wood is in abundance, so if a little is wasted in the first attempts, it is of no consequence ; but in places where it is scarce, such as the Argentine Republic, I should not recommend an inexperienced hand to expend precious fuel in attempting the production of charcoal. A number of billets of wood, any of the varieties of gum will do, are built up in a large conical heap, the ends sticking up, not lying down horizontally—several holes being left at the bottom for the air to get in, and a good-sized hollow place in the centre,

to act as a chimney or flue, by which the gaseous matter may escape. This mound is covered well over with sand, turf, moistened clay, or anything that comes to hand, care, of course, being taken to keep the holes and flue free. In building the heap, pieces of wood should be so placed as to run across the flue and prevent the fire from at once falling to the bottom, making, in fact, a kind of grate. The pile is now ready for ignition, and this is effected by throwing burning brands into the central opening. The combustion then proceeds gradually from the top to the bottom, and from the centre to the outside of the heap; and as the central portions burn away, fresh wood is continually thrown in at the top, so as to keep the heap quite full. The progress of the combustion is indicated by the appearance of the smoke, which is very thick and white if things are going on properly; but if it becomes thin, and especially if a blue flame appears — which happened pretty frequently in George's earlier attempts—it is a sign that the wood is burning away too fast, and the combustion must then be checked by partially stopping up the holes at the bottom, or by heaping fresh ashes on the top and sides, and pressing them well down, so as to diminish the draught. When the combustion is completed, the holes are all closed, the heap entirely covered with turf or ashes, and left for two

or three days to cool, after which it is uncovered and the coal spread around in thin layers, any hot portions being cooled by throwing water or sand upon them; this is best done at night when any fire is quickly seen in the darkness.

The operation, I have no doubt, seems very simple and easy to the reader, but in reality it is very difficult, and requires the most unremitting attention during the whole time of burning, which lasts for several days, according to the size of the heap. The collier must be always on his guard to prevent unequal falling in of the surface by too long-continued action of the fire in any place; to prevent explosions, which sometimes occur from bad ventilation of the heap—poor George having once left his heap for a few minutes was gratified on his return by finding it all “bust-up,” as the Yankees would say, and blazing away in a fashion more cheerful to an uninterested beholder than to the charcoal-burner, whose labour was entirely thrown away;—and to shield the mound from wind and rain. The wind causes too great combustion on the side against which it blows, which is only remedied by closing the apertures and increasing the thickness and moisture of the covering. The older and more seasoned the wood is the better charcoal it makes.

One of the chief qualities in the emigrant should be a knack of turning to account the things that

lie close to hand instead of hankering after what is unattainable. Now with regard to the very substance of which we are now speaking, charcoal, I knew a man who set up a forge in the bush, never for a moment thinking what he was to burn in it, and from no knowledge of the manufacture of charcoal, he was at his wit's ends after the few sacks he had brought up with him from the port were burned. Luckily for both of them a German, who had been brought up amongst the colliers of the Hartz Mountains, passed his station, soon supplied the much-wanted article, and made a greater sum of money in a few weeks than he would have gained in as many months by his avowed calling of shepherding. Depend upon it, no knowledge, however slight, is thrown away in the bush; and a man with his eyes well open will always find the thing he wants, or a very good substitute for it, within reach, if he only knows in what direction to stretch his hand to lay hold of it.

George found bush fare a little monotonous, for one does get tired of nothing but damper and beef after a time. Damper is unleavened bread; and though sheep are so plentiful in Australia that the exportation of wool is its staple product, mutton is a luxury rarely to be found in the bush. The reason of this is that the wool is too valuable to justify the slaughter of the wool-bearer, particu-

larly as the sheep are bred entirely for their fleeces, and no pains is taken to fatten the carcase, which is miserably small and thin. Two sharp-set bushmen would think nothing of a leg of mutton at one meal, and they would get up hungry from a single shoulder. So, on all plantations and sheep stations, beef is the only animal food tasted from one year's end to another, and this is killed on the spot. At Mr. Dawson's, where there were so many hands—although the coolies are not very carnivorous—a beast only lasted a week, so the meat was comparatively fresh ; but on small outlying stations having only two or three hands, one bullock lasts for months, and becomes so salt and tough towards the end as to be almost uneatable. From this unvarying diet of unleavened bread and salt beef, scurvy not unfrequently arises, and the blood becomes in such an impoverished state that the slightest abrasion of the skin ulcerates and becomes a formidable sore. All this of course may be prevented by the most ordinary care. Pumpkin seeds can always be got and sown ; several kinds of edible wild plants are to be found, and game is never far away. The fact is that men in the bush will not take the slightest pains to make themselves comfortable. I have known shepherds grumble because pumpkins were not sent out with their rations, and a week afterwards grumble because they *were*.

"The cove" (the elegant term generally used for the "employer") "would see a fellow rot before he'd send out even a pumpkin," they said in the first place; and when the wished-for vegetable was sent agreeably to their desire—

"Does the cove think a fellow's nothing better to do than to cook that rubbish when he comes home?" cried one.

"Ah, he wants to save his flour, he does, but blessed if I wouldn't heave it into the creek sooner," replies his amiable mate, and that is all the thanks the "cove" received for lugging a great unwieldy pumpkin out on a packhorse.

As is the case with every "new chum"—as all fresh arrivals are called in Australia—George suffered very much from mosquito bites at first. During the summer months these winged and minute pests are very abundant, and irritating to a degree. A plump full-blooded "new chum" is a rare delicacy to hungry mosquitoes, and accordingly he is favoured with the most unremitting attentions. The venom left in the wound causes an irresistible longing to rub the affected part, and should the victim in his agony break the skin, an angry sore follows. I have seen many new arrivals terribly tormented, but after a few months of the beef and damper regimen they become less appetising, and enjoy a comparative immunity. Still mosquitoes:

are a great scourge, and during the time they are at their worst it would be impossible to get to sleep at night without the protection afforded by curtains and cow-dung fires, the latter of which, by causing an aromatic smoke, has a very deterrent effect upon them. Nor are their attacks by any means confined to human beings, for horses and cattle suffer perhaps worse. Sandflies by day and mosquitoes by night hang about them in clouds, attacking all the tender parts, and quite preventing the poor things standing still. You see them wandering about in strings, such of them as have tails keeping them going like flails, and naturally want of rest makes them fall off in condition. When I say "such as have tails," I by no means wish to infer that the custom of docking horses is practised in Australia. Such an absurd plan would be fifty-fold more cruel in a country so infested with insects. But tailless cattle are by no means uncommon. This is owing to their having undergone inoculation as a preventive to the dreaded lung disease *pleuro-pneumonia*. The operation is much the same as that we are all subjected to for small-pox, except that virus taken from a diseased animal is used instead of vaccine lymph, and in place of being inserted in the arm it is applied to a slight incision in the under part of the tail, which often

causes the loss of this useful member. Sometimes only the whisk at the extremity is lost, but at others the tail drops off close to the rump, leaving only an unsightly little stump behind. The ordinary black house flies are another nuisance ; they cover everything, and seem to emit living maggots on any meat that is not placed beyond their reach.

But after all, as is the case with every emigrant who does not arrive with a settled determination to dislike and find fault with all around him, George found that the drawbacks were more than counterbalanced by the benefits he received. His health was good ; the climate, though hot, was remarkably exhilarating (oh ! for a touch of the clear blue sky and elastic air of Queensland to gladden our hearts sometimes in dear murky old England !) ; he was receiving excellent wages, every halfpenny of which he was laying by ; he was a landed proprietor, for the £50 from the ship-owners he had invested in a suburban lot near Brisbane ; and he was happy. So what more could he wish ? and on the anniversary of his landing at Sydney he could feel satisfied with the past, contented with the present, and sanguine and hopeful as regarded the future.

CHAPTER VI.

THE burning Canadian summer, succeeded by the short but delightful period between autumn and winter, called the "Indian summer," had passed away ; the crops had been gathered in and housed ; heaps of cord or fire-wood stacked adjacent to the house ; the sleighs got out and put in working order ; and every possible device resorted to in order to give Jack Frost a warm reception and rob him of his icy terrors. To both Nellie and James the autumn had been full of pleasure, indeed the least romantic mind must be pleasingly impressed by the gorgeous robe of many colours worn by the forest at that season. The variegated wild vine creeping to the summit of the rose-tinted maple, there embraces the scarlet Canadian ivy, and both twine themselves into festoons and wreaths of indescribable beauty. The early part of November was made lovely by the Indian summer, that short and curious season of tranquillity when the bare feeling of existence is delightful, and which has been attributed by some writers to the firing of distant forests by the Indians ; but towards the

middle of that month, with a swoop and a rush, the Sea King left his realm by the far-off shores of Hudson's Bay and enveloped Grassmere in his snowy garment. The winter rarely gives warning of its approach. In England it is heralded by fog, damp, and all kinds of disagreeable presages, but in Canada, as by the touch of a magic wand, the country is transformed in a day. The air is breathless, the parti-coloured leaves hang unmoved from the branches, and the sun looks down from the murky heavens red and sultry. But suddenly a distant roaring sound is heard approaching, the cattle rush tumultuously from the neighbourhood of timber to the clearings; all human beings seek the shelter of the nearest friendly roof; and with a hurricane that uproots many a lofty pine and snaps others short off as though they were matchwood, old Winter, cloaked in blinding snow, rushes down; and when by this rough process he has asserted his supremacy, and his intention to remain in possession for the next five months, he becomes less blustering and violent, but none the less has he established his icy rule.

In Canada there is no time to be idle, and winter has its allotted portion of work to be performed as well as the other seasons. The new patch of ground which had been underbrushed in the fall had now to be cleared. "Underbrushing"

is cutting away with the axe all undergrowth, and the saplings not more than six inches in diameter. The harvest had to be thrashed out and sent to the grist-mill to be turned into flour, for all heavy traffic is done in the winter on sleighs over the beautiful tracks formed by the snow, and on which one horse will do the work of three on any ordinary road. Now also the fresh supplies of stores had to be laid in, and many pleasant trips Nellie had into Bison, sitting snugly wrapped up in buffalo-robcs, and piloted by Henry or her brother in a light sleigh with a couple of spanking horses, whose silver-toned bells tinkling in the clear frosty air awakened the echoes of the silent forest. In Canada ready money is seldom paid by the settler for his necessities. In each township there is a store, in which everything needful can be obtained, and the storekeeper is always ready enough to barter, and to purchase all products the farmer may bring him. So in exchange for his corn, potash, salt hog, &c., Henry laid in the supplies necessary to carry him through another year, and also bargained for a quantity of sawn wood to enlarge the house.

But though there was abundance of work to be done they always found time for amusement, of which during the winter there is plenty going on. The distance between the different farms is bridged

over by the snow, and a drive of fifteen or twenty miles to attend a "quilting bee" is thought nothing of. Bees are an institution peculiar to North America, and are based on the principle of mutual assistance; thus, a settler wishes to build a new house, which he would be quite unable to do single-handed, and to hire help would be a greater expense than he could afford, so having got the timber ready he sends round to all his neighbours within ten or twenty miles, according to the thickness with which the country is settled, and calls a "raising bee." Not to respond to such a call would be looked upon as an insult, and if a farmer is prevented from attending in person he always sends a man or a yoke of oxen. As soon as the work is done—and they work with a will—an entertainment is given to the hive, at which a good deal of amusement takes place, such as athletic sports, round games, and such like, usually wound up by a dance carried far into the next morning. In some of the outlying districts they are of a rougher kind; only men attend, and much heavy drinking goes on; but, except in a few cases, all license is dying out at these social gatherings. Logging, raising, reaping, shucking, quilting, the bees are without number, and most admirable institutions they are. "All work and no play" applies to Canada as much as to any other country in which the trite

saying obtains ; and not only are bees good in the help they render to a new-comer, but they rub off the rust engendered by a life of such seclusion as a backwoodsman's. Shy, awkward, and unwilling, the young man is dragged into companionship with the other sex, and half the married Canadians you meet first set eyes on their better-half at a "bee." There is no doubt that they also create a kind and neighbourly feeling, and to the struggling settler they are invaluable.

Nor is the privilege of calling a "bee" confined to the ruder sex. The ladies have most charming little gatherings, to which the men are graciously admitted on sufferance. Such are the quilting, shucking, and coring bees, in which the ladies muster and deftly sew together the many-hued patchwork from whence the first-mentioned bee derives its name, whilst the young men further the good work by threading the needles, loosing the reels of cotton, and keeping up a running fire of conversation and repartee, in which some smart hitting takes place. Or the gathering is to free the yellow maize from its cob or shuck ; or to cut up the fine juicy apples and string them for hanging up until required for use. Whichever kind may be the order of the day, they are most pleasant breaks to the monotony of the backwoodsman's life, and to my mind more girls and more

quilting bees would be a great improvement to Canada, for in no place are the endearing ties of domestic relation stronger, or a suitable union more productive of happiness.

“Now, Jim, come out and try your *foot* at snow-shoes, for you will have to master them before you think of buck shooting,” said Henry, when one morning they found the snow had fallen so thickly during the night as to render walking in ordinary boots most irksome and fatiguing.

“Now, Miss Nellie, you watch,” said old Patsy, as the unsuspecting Jim, sitting on a half-covered log, was adjusting his snow-shoes preparatory to making his first attempt, and never dreaming of failure, so easy did the process seem, as exemplified by Henry, who, an adept in their use, was skimming over the soft surface with speed and ease.

“Now then, Jim, are you ready? Come and join me.”

“I’m com——”

But the last portion of the word was lost in three feet of snow, into which at the first step Jim had pitched head foremost; and he was now sitting down brushing off the snow and looking so exquisitely ludicrous that they were all convulsed with laughter; even Silas Quidd, who by letting drop the monosyllable “Prime!” betrayed his inward satisfaction and appreciation of the scene.

Snow-shoes, which are worn under the feet to prevent their sinking into the soft snow, are light maple frames of elliptical shape, rounded off in front and terminating in a long point behind, three to four feet in length, and a little over a foot wide in the middle. The central portion included within the outer curved frame is filled with a stiff network of strips of deer hide or moose skin, much resembling a tennis bat. A cross piece of wood in front serves as a support for the ball of the foot, which is fastened to the shoe by thongs brought up round it. The feet of the person using snow-shoes are encased in mocassins of buckskin, sufficiently large to admit three or four thicknesses of blanket, which serves not only to keep the foot warm but also to prevent the toes being chafed by the buckskin thongs which are passed over them. In walking with them the foot is necessarily thrown outward with a swinging motion, which it takes some practice to acquire; and a person unaccustomed to their use forgets this, and trying to step forward in the usual way, finds himself in the position in which we left James. The use of snow-shoes is essential to any one who wishes to enjoy the sport of shooting in winter, for with their aid he easily overtakes the deer and moose, whose sharp-pointed feet cut deep into the snow, which tires them and impedes their progress.

One evening Nellie and Henry were coming home in the sleigh from a quilting bee at a neighbour's some ten miles off, having left James behind them for a few days' shooting. It was a lovely starlight night, and the full moon shining down on the snow-laden branches of the lofty pines bathed the forest avenues in silver streams of exquisite beauty, while no sound broke the deep silence of night save the merry tinkling of the horses' bells. Nellie was very happy, and leaning back in the comfortable sleigh and drawing the bearskin robe more tightly round her, she fell into a reverie, in which old familiar Norton, with its well-known nooks and corners, came back vividly to her memory, and she was thinking, shall I ever see the dear old place again? when a soft pattering in the snow broke the current of her thoughts, and looking behind the sleigh, she said to Henry—

“Whose dogs are those following us?”

“Oh! they will soon go back,” he replied; but Nellie remembered afterwards how white his face seemed in the moonlight, and how the whip was brought down upon the startled horses, until they fairly broke into a gallop.

“Why are you in such a hurry this lovely night? I am sure I could sit here until morning enjoying the quiet of the forest, and the poor horses will be quite tired if you drive at that pace. But look, the

dogs are following us still, and there seem more of them !”

“Nellie, can you drive ?” he answered quickly.

“Drive ! of course I can ; but why do you ask me ?”

“Take the reins a minute, while I get out my gun and frighten away those cowardly wolves, they little think I have got a charge of buck-shot to tickle them up with.” But though he spoke carelessly, none knew better than Henry the awful peril they were in.

“Oh ! do shoot one, and you shall give me the skin as a trophy,” she said, quite unconscious of danger ; “tell me when you are ready and I’ll pull up so that you can get a steady shot. I’m not the least afraid of a gun, though I dare say you think I am,” she added, laughing ; “poor papa used often to let me go out with him.”

She had freed herself from the buffalo robe as she ceased speaking, and now held out her hands for the reins, while Henry, stooping down to disengage his gun from the straps, could hear the patter patter of the cruel feet on the snow close behind the sleigh.

“Now, darling, for God’s sake keep your nerve,” he said, as turning round he fired the charge into the breast of the foremost wolf, which rolled over dead in its tracks. Well was it that Nellie was a

brave girl, for never was anything heard more truly hideous than the war cry that burst forth from the famished pack at the startling report, and when she handed Henry the reins and glanced back she saw their tossing mass, riving and tearing at the body of their fallen comrade. He threw away all disguise now, and bidding Nellie load the empty barrel again, applied himself to the task of guiding the terrified horses. No need of whip, that fearful chorus in their rear too plainly conveyed to the poor animals the deadly enemies that followed in their wake. Enemies—

“With their long gallop, which can tire
The hound’s deep note, and hunter’s fire.”

And they rushed madly onward at such speed that the sleigh rocked from side to side, and the greatest skill was requisite to avoid an upset.

“Four more miles,” muttered Hughes, as with both hands he guided the horses, the perspiration standing in little ice-beads on his forehead; “please God we shall do it. Look behind, Nellie, and see if you can make them out.”

“No, there are none. Yes,” she said after a pause, “I see one now—and two—another has just joined—now there are several. Oh, my God, my God, Harry, what shall we do?” and the full peril breaking upon her, she wrung her hands in the agony of despair.

"Here is a pretty heroine," I hear some of my readers say. "Just at the critical moment she is going to faint or something equally absurd;" but the brave little Kentish maiden was not in the habit of indulging in such fashionable weaknesses, and after the first pardonable paroxysm of terror, she grew calm and resolute, and turning to her lover, said simply—

"Harry, dear, whatever you tell me I'll do, I'm only a little frightened;" and the gallant little mouth tried to wreath itself into its natural smile.

"Courage, darling, we'll manage it yet," he replied; "thank Heaven I've got the tomahawk."

Fast as the sleigh is going the pursuers are gaining on them, and now the ominous pattering is heard approaching nearer and nearer, while the horses, conscious of their vicinity, strain every nerve to increase their speed. Look at the fierce pack now as they sweep ruthlessly along with their red tongues distended, and the flickering moonlight adding to their size, and say if it is not a sight to curdle the blood of greater aspirants to the name of hero than gentle little Nellie Fletcher. Think what would be the fate of any living thing falling into the jaws of that ravenous crew, and think that the slightest obstacle in the road, or the smallest breakage in the harness, would infallibly occasion that catastrophe; think that they have

two miles yet before them, and that the powder flask has been jolted out in one of the surgings of the sleigh, and I am sure you will acknowledge that our heroine is no every-day girl, when she can unflinchingly look such a fearful death in the face.

“Now, dear, they must have the last shot, it is our only chance,” and again the report echoed forth, checking the pursuit as before, but not for so long, and the fugitives have still half-a-mile to cover, when the foremost of the pack is again close to the tail of the sleigh.

On—on—on, every second seeming a lifetime, and now a few hundred yards will carry them into safety. The leading wolf makes a bound at the sleigh, but falls back crippled by a blow from the keen tomahawk struck by brave little Nellie, for Henry is entirely taken up by the horses, and cannot relinquish the reins. Another one takes its place instantly, and succeeds in seizing the overhanging buffalo robe.

“Let him have it,” cries Henry, giving at the same time a shout of joy, for a light is seen ahead—the light from the window where Patsy is sitting up ironing; the cowardly assailants have seen it too, for they drop behind savage and baulked, and the horses, white with frozen lather, pull up snorting and trembling at the house door, as Nellie's



CHASED BY WOLVES.

overstrung feelings give way and she sinks senseless into Patsy's outstretched arms.

"Now, Jim," said Henry one evening on his return from Bison, "there is a good chance for you; I hear of some splendid new country that has just been surveyed on Widgeon Lake, and you ought to be early afield to secure the first pick. It is only sixty miles from here, and would suit you admirably, for I could always run over and give you help at first. So what do you say if we start tomorrow and have a look at it. We can spare a few days now, and shall be back in time to tap the sugar bush."

James was delighted at the idea, for he had been hankering after land of his own for some time, and by this arrangement he would be within easy distance of Nellie, whose marriage with Henry was to take place as soon as she had seen her brother safely installed in his own farm.

"There is no use in our being in a hurry, Jim, and we'll overhaul the country until we find a suitable allotment. Here is the rough tracing I got from the Survey Office, which gives a pretty good idea of the location, and it's odd if we don't find something that will suit you."

They had accomplished the journey in two days, and were now under shelter of the little tent they had brought with them in the sleigh. This was the

first time that Jim had regularly "camped out." The solemn stillness of the vast wilderness, whose snow-laden pines stretched out their arms as if to warn off the unwelcome intruders who would ere long lay the axe to their noble roots, caused him to feel a sensation of indescribable loneliness, while the thoughts of the wolves effectually drove all sleep from his eyes—a feeling by no means entertained by Henry, if one might judge from his measured breathing, which indicated a slumber sound as that indulged in by the most somnolent of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.

In a week they had thoroughly explored every likely spot in the neighbourhood of Lake Widgeon, and had found a piece of land on the border of the lake, through the middle of which ran a nice little stream, which, as Henry remarked, would be of great assistance in the manufacture of potash. In choosing a farm in the primeval forest, of course the quality of the land is the first point of consideration, and going to look at a place in winter, with thick snow on the ground, may hardly seem the safest way of ascertaining this. But the experienced backwoodsman knows by a thousand little signs what is the nature of the soil under his feet. The best and principal guide is the timber, and if he finds oak, ash, elm, beech, bass-wood, and sugar maple mixed together, he may rest assured that the

land is good. Too great a proportion of beech is to be avoided, for it indicates a light sandy soil; while too many rock-elms show that limestone or gravel are too near the surface to be agreeable to the farmer. The more lofty, clean, and straight-grained the timber is the better, and if tolerably free from underbrush better still. Sometimes land, which is admirably adapted for cultivation in every other respect, is filled with boulders or large stones, which, from being three parts buried, are difficult to detect, and in winter almost impossible. When limestone-flag underlies the surface, its presence is indicated by the appearance of the trees; their stems are shorter, the heads more bushy, and their roots run along the top of the ground. Ridges of white pine or hemlock alone are always sandy and of little use; but white pine mixed with hard wood denotes that the soil is stiff clay and good for wheat.

The allotment selected by James, under Henry's advice, consisted of about four hundred acres, with a frontage to the lake of a quarter of a mile, in which was included the little stream before mentioned. The banks of the lake had rather a forbidding appearance, being clothed with sombre cedar and hemlock to the water's edge; but as soon as the summit of their slopes was gained, good land, clothed with the most promising mixture of

hard timber, made its appearance. By the side of the stream was a beautiful beaver meadow, of some thirty acres in extent, formed by the labour of these industrious little animals during many centuries. Such meadows are found on the banks of almost every Canadian stream, testifying to the number of beavers there must at one time have been, and are the result of repeated repairs of the dam thrown across the river to ensure a sufficient supply of water in the winter, for if not artificially deepened it would freeze and confine them to their lodges. The meadows sometimes gain the enormous size of three or four hundred acres, and many a Canadian farmer owes his richest land to the labours of bygone generations of beavers. They are but rarely found in the inhabited parts now, except in the shape of pets. Their valuable fur has raised the most pitiless of all enemies, man, against them ; and soon the fertile fields that they have so laboriously constructed will be the only witnesses of their ever having existed.

“ Harry, Harry,” whispered Jim cautiously one night to Hughes, shaking him from a deep sleep, “ there is a light moving about on the ice, I’ve been watching it for the last half-hour, what can it be ? ”

“ All right,” said Henry, “ go to sleep ; it’s only some Indians fishing,” and not another word could Jim get out of him.

James was in a high state of excitement at the thought of meeting the red man in his native wilds. He pictured to himself that the morning light would reveal a noble chief, of the Fenimore Cooper type, who would stalk haughtily past their encampment, clad in flowing buffalo robe, and motion the pale-face to depart and leave in peace the happy hunting-ground of the Indian. Thus pondering he fell asleep, and was awaked from a dream of scalping-knives and prisoners at the stake by a touch on the shoulder, and opening his eyes found a very mild, inoffensive-looking, but remarkably dirty Indian leaning over him, with a number of frozen trout on a string of birch withes, who, instead of warning him off, said—

“ Give poor Indian rum ; me give fish.”

Could this be the magnificent savage of whom he had heard so much, this miserable-looking, half-starved wretch, who would barter the fish that he had sat up all night to catch for a glass of rum, leaving his squaw, who now appeared toiling up the bank with a papoose slung at her back, to starve.

But James was a good-natured fellow, and though his ideal was thus rudely dashed to the ground, he did not pour out the vials of his wrath on its destroyer, but poured out instead a small dram from his flask, which the Indian drank up greedily ;

nor did his better-half refuse a like delicate attention.

The natives are a very harmless race, fond of a roving life, during which they often encounter terrible privations, finding it hard work to supply themselves with food. In the vicinity of towns they are quite civilised, wearing European clothes, having orthodox Christian and surnames, and going to church like any one else. The chief of one of these tribes would not feel the least flattered if you called him "the nimble skunk," instead of Mr. Jones, or spoke of his neatly furnished house as a "wigwam." Those in the more outlying districts retain in a great measure their ancient habits, wandering about the woods, though they return to certain places every year at particular seasons. Their wigwams are formed of light poles, so as to enclose a space of ten or twelve feet in diameter, planted about a foot or eighteen inches apart at the bottom, and coming to a point, or rather cone, at the top. These poles are covered with that most useful of natural products, the birch bark, with sheets of which the "lodge" is covered within and without, a space being left at the apex of the cone to permit the escape of smoke, which arises from a fire in the centre of the floor. The interior is gained by two holes opposite to each other, through which the inhabitants crawl, and which are stopped up with a

piece of blanket at night. They are remarkably warm, and when you have said that, you have exhausted the catalogue of their merits.

The Indians are a well-built people, and from their habits of exercise, corpulence is rare amongst them. Their features are broad, the cheek-bones high, the eyes dark and slightly pointed at the corners, and the hair long, coarse, and black. In complexion they resemble a reddish-coloured English gipsy, and a beard is never seen on the face of a full-blooded Indian, though half-breds are found with scant tufts on their chins. The Indian is naturally grave and sedate, but he is as ready to laugh as any one else, and under the influence of spirits, which I regret to say he often takes to excess, he becomes quite hilarious ; roaring, shouting, and yelling as naturally and as gracefully as his pale-faced brother under the same circumstances. They are by no means ungrateful, and although they are sparing of thanks when a present is made to them, they generally manage to acknowledge their gratitude by the gift of a fine salmon or a brace or two of wild ducks. As I mentioned before, the more civilised Indians wear European garments, but the dress of the others consists of a blanket, fastened together with a kind of wooden skewer, and mocassins of soft deerskin ; the latter are generally sewn on the foot and

allowed to remain there untouched until worn out.

Some of the squaws are pretty, but age destroys all comeliness, and, unlike the men, they often become fat. Many very beautiful and useful little articles are manufactured by the squaws, such as brooms, baskets, ornamental mocassins, &c., which are prettily adorned with dyed porcupine quills or beads. Much has been written and said about the fortitude with which an Indian will undergo privations; and when compelled by hunger, or stimulated by hopes of earning spirits, no doubt he will submit to much hardship without a murmur, but this philosophy is entirely owing to the knowledge that complaining will do him no good. Sitting all night long in a Canadian winter, waiting at a hole in the ice to spear fish, is hardly an agreeable occupation, and yet James's new acquaintance did it on the chance—not the certainty, only the chance—of a glass of rum.

On their return to Grassmere, James at once went into Bison to see the government surveyor about the location he had chosen, and having put this in proper train, he employed himself in digging out wooden troughs for the maple sugar, and in occasional shooting and fishing excursions. Game is very plentiful in the thinly-populated portions of Canada, and any one with the least experience of

woodcraft can easily keep his larder supplied with bear meat, venison, wild geese, ducks, partridges, and a variety of other smaller fry ; while fish is always to be got. During the winter Master Bruin takes up his quarters in a hollow tree, and is not to be got at ; but in the spring he wakes up from his lengthy slumber pretty sharp-set, and then he is very apt to have a fancy for the farmer's fresh pork. Unless much pushed by hunger, or wounded, the bear is always ready enough to make his escape from a human being, but he is too much valued for his fur and flesh to get away so easily. Every portion of him is turned to some account ; bear hams, bear-paws' soup, salt bear, fresh bear, bear steaks, not a bit of him is wasted ; and from the enormous quantity of fat he contains he is a most welcome prize to the settler. Deer are often seen, and indeed will commit great havoc amongst the crops unless the fences are well looked to. Wild geese and ducks are shot from behind brushwood hiding places, where the sportsman sits and waits for them. This is terribly cold work, and if he is not properly clad the gunner is very likely to be frost-bitten. Of other game birds, partridges are the most common. Of these there are two kinds, the birch and the spruce partridges ; both are exceedingly good—the former being larger than our English bird, with white flesh ; while the spruce,

which derives its name from tasting slightly of spruce fir, is perhaps a little smaller. They are both easily killed, as they settle on the branches of trees, which they will not forsake; so you can go on firing away until you have bagged a whole covey, provided always that you commence with the lower one and shoot upwards; for if you fired at the topmost bird first, its body falling through the others would frighten and cause them to quit the tree. In the spring immense flocks of pigeons pass, so dense as to quite darken the air, and dozens may be got at a shot.

Anybody in Canada who lives on the banks of a lake or river can have as much fish as he pleases. Salmon are very plentiful, and are caught with the rod, the net, or by spearing. The latter method is a very favourite sport, and takes place towards the close of the fall (autumn), when the fish make their way up the creeks and rivers. A "jack," or iron cage, is placed in the bows of a canoe on a stand which allows it to swing with the motion of the boat and thus keep its level, otherwise the pine knots which are used for fuel would fall out. This casts a brilliant light for some yards in advance of the canoe, and enables the fish to be seen at a depth of several feet. One person in the stern steers and propels with the paddle, while the spearman kneels in the bows with his weapon poised. An expert hand

will rarely miss a fish ; but a greenhorn is more than likely to souse head over heels into the water, if he avoids capsizing the frail birchen canoe itself.

“ Now then, Jim, the weather is just right now—the days warm and the nights frosty—so let’s get the traps together, and to-morrow we’ll begin our sugaring.”

The paraphernalia for this important manufacture is by no means of a complicated nature, consisting of several large iron kettles, three-quarter inch augurs, casks, buckets, and axes. These they took out in a sleigh the next morning to the sugar-bush, which was at some miles distance from the house, and busied themselves in pitching their tent, sheltering it with bark, drawing firewood enough for the boiling, and placing the troughs at the trunks of the trees about to be tapped.

The rock or sugar maple is the most common of the Canadian hard-wood trees, and is found growing in patches of from half-a-dozen to thirty acres, associated with scattering birch and other varieties, and only where the soil is good. Nearly every farm has a “ sugar-bush,” as these patches are called, which is carefully cleared of all underbrush. Roads are cut, radiating in every direction from the centre, in which the boiling is performing, to enable the sleigh to bring the juice to the kettles ; and the whole bush securely fenced to exclude cattle, which

are curious with regard to maple sugar, and will assail any weak point in your fence, so anxious are they to participate in the sweets of the flowing sap.

All arrangements having been completed, the whole party, except Patsy, who was left at home to keep house, started early in the morning for the sugar bush, where James and Nellie were to be initiated into the mysteries of perhaps the most important natural manufacture in Canada. The weather was in every way suitable, the nights frosty and the days bright and sunshiny, causing the sap to rise vigorously and flow freely. There is no fixed time for sugar-making, and the settler must be entirely guided by the season; however, the middle of March is usually within a week or so of the mark. The kettles were suspended from a horizontal pole by iron chains, the wood laid underneath ready to light at a moment's notice; and then came tapping the first tree, a post of honour awarded to Nellie, who, superintended—and a good deal assisted—by Henry, bored through the rind and about half-an-inch into the white wood on the south or sunny side of the tree, with the augur. Into this hole a split piece of elder, from which the pith has been removed to form a spile or conductor for the sap, is inserted; the trough, which is capable of containing four gallons, is placed in a level position and directly under the drop, and then, as the

first drop of juice trickles slowly down the tube, and falls into the receptacle beneath, a loud hurrah rings through the wood, for now the sugar season has commenced in earnest. Even this operation of tapping, simple as it seems, requires a good deal of judgment to know exactly the depth to make the augur hole, and the exact distance to drive in the spile, for an error on the side of either too little depth or too great penetration will materially affect the flow of the sap.

As soon as the troughs are full they are emptied into a cask secured on a sleigh, into the bunghole of which is inserted a funnel with a piece of tin punched full of holes in its centre, to act as a strainer. This sleigh visits the different trees, and when it has collected a load, it returns to the centre or "sugar-camp," and the sap is transferred to casks, and from thence to the boiling kettles, whilst the sleigh starts off afresh. The four weeks during which the sugar season lasts are weeks of unremitting toil and vigilance, for the work must proceed by night as well as by day, and one or more of the party must always be upon the watch. The kettles having received their first charge of sap, the fires are lighted and the process of evaporation commences. The sap is kept boiling night and day, until it is reduced to enough thin molasses to make a batch of sugar, when it is turned into a

deep trough and allowed to cool and settle ; after which the liquor is carefully poured into a large boiler, great care being taken not to disturb the sediment.

Now comes the clarifying process, to get rid of the earthy particles and other impurities. Eggs are used for this purpose, in the proportion of six eggs to fifty pounds of sugar. They are beaten up with about a quart of molasses, then poured into the liquor in the large boiler, and stirred in well whilst cold. This boiler should be suspended from a crane made fast to an old stump, so that it can be swung off the fire in a moment. This is very easily done, for any bushman can knock up a crane ; and it saves an infinity of trouble. A slow fire is lighted under it, and as soon as the molasses begin to simmer, the scum will gather and rise to the surface with the egg. The instant it begins to boil the crane must be swung off the fire, and the scum carefully removed, when there will be no impurities left, and the molasses will look bright and clear.

The liquor is now in working order, and the turning it into sugar comes next, a process demanding the operator's closest attention, for the molass is always bubbling up and on the point of boiling over every moment, a catastrophe only to be avoided by the greatest watchfulness. One of the greatest difficulties a new hand has to encounter is

finding out when the liquor is boiled enough. The usual way of ascertaining this is to dip into the molasses a thin stick, in which you have made a hole an inch long and the eighth of an inch wide. When the stick is withdrawn this hole will be found filled with a thin film, which, if blown, will, if the sugar is sufficiently boiled, throw out a long bubble. It has then attained the proper consistency for granulation, and is poured into tin dishes or birch-bark frames, from which the molass soon drains, and leaves the sugar perfectly dry and hard, of a dark brown colour, and of a peculiar pleasant taste.

The expedients resorted to to prevent the liquor boiling over are various, one of the most common being the suspension of a piece of fat pork by a string, so as to hang an inch or two below the rim, which, when met by the bubbling fluid, has the effect of checking its overflowing. The first run of the sap always produces the best sugar ; later on crystallisation is less easy, but good molasses can be obtained ; whilst in the last stage excellent vinegar is manufactured. By boiling down five gallons of the later sap to two, letting it cool to milk-heat, then adding a cupful of "hop-rising," and allowing the vessel to stand during the summer, you will obtain most excellent vinegar.

We have now followed our heroine and her eldest brother through most of the every-day life of a

Canadian settler, in a sparsely-settled district, and briefly explained the various home-made articles that are manufactured on every farm; in our next chapter we shall see how they get on in the wild bush, far away from help, and with only themselves to depend upon.

CHAPTER VII.

SPRING had passed away, the hot summer had forced forward the vegetation to early maturity, and had subsided into the pleasant autumn season, before "The Beavers" was in fit condition to receive Nellie. After the sugar-making, James, who now considered himself rather a good backwoodsman, had started for his new farm, named "The Beavers" in gratitude to the little animals that had done so much towards clearing the ground, accompanied by two men whom he had hired to assist him. The first thing they did was to select a site for the house; and the ridge overlooking Lake Widgeon in front, bounded on the right by the little stream (the Brawl), and having the beaver-meadow at its right rear, was the spot chosen. Having determined on this, the next step was the building of a shanty to shelter them during their labours, and until the completion of which they had to live under canvas. The two labourers were experienced axemen, and soon the ridge became denuded of its lofty timber, and the trunks "logged

up," either for building and fencing purposes, or for burning. The beaver-meadow was fenced off securely for the cattle on their arrival, and this was done for the present by a system sometimes adopted in Canada, called "slash fencing." By a skilful use of the axe, the trees were felled in such a direction as to form a natural fence, rough certainly, and imperfect in parts, but still, with a little patching, answering the purpose admirably, and serving to keep the oxen within bounds until time permitted of a more workman-like enclosure. In clearing the ridge, by the adoption of a device called making "plan-heaps," James and his men saved themselves much trouble and extra labour. Three or four of the largest trees were felled one on the top of the other. These were not logged-up, but only their branches cut off and piled on the heap. Then, by looking out for favourable winds, and a judicious use of the axe, all the trees that could be induced to take that direction were felled across the heap. Three, or at the most four, of these heaps were made to the acre, and when the fallow came to be burnt off, they were almost entirely consumed, thus saving much valuable time which would otherwise have been expended in chopping. Another system was to take a number of trees in a line, cut them half or three parts through, and then fell the end one against the second, which will, if properly notched,

fall against the third, and so on, until the whole are down. A "run," as it is called, is a very effective thing when skilfully carried out ; the whole row are borne crashing to the ground one after the other, like a child's pack-of-card houses, and the delighted settler sees a palpable gap made in the dense forest. It need scarcely be said that wherever practicable this is the plan adopted to make a slash fence.

The reader may perhaps wonder why the ground is not stumped at once, and cleared for good ; but it would never pay to do so, for time is too valuable to be expended in any labour that does not promise an immediate return ; therefore the roots and stumps are permitted to remain until old age rots them, or until there is time to burn them. It is a curious fact that the hard wood stumps decay in a third of the time that it takes to get rid of pine stumps ; the former moulder away in nine or ten years, but it takes nearly thirty to get free from the latter. By clearing away the timber, and admitting light and air to the ground, you ensure a succession of crops, so that, as the proportion you can clear to that you can stump is at the least seven to one, and as the roots do no harm beyond occupying room, it stands to reason that where land is so plentiful, it would be waste of time to *fallow* your ground. The native Canadians know

best, and they would sooner *clear* than *fallow*, and many prefer this new cleared to old land, from the heavy crops it produces.

As soon as James and his men had made a sufficient clearance, their first care was to plant potatoes and Indian corn for home consumption. This process is very simple, consisting of merely drawing furrows with the plough three feet one way, and then three feet across—forming little patches like a chess-board of a yard square—and at the points of intersection planting three cuts, with an eye or two in each for seed. This is done very quickly with a spade, and when they grow they are earthed up into mounds. Many settlers sow with the hoe alone, thinking ploughing a needless work. The cultivation of Indian corn is much the same on new land, though on long-settled farms it requires greater care. Holes are chopped with a hoe, at a less distance than for potatoes, in each of which is dropped three or four corn-seeds, and in about every fourth hole a pumpkin seed is dropped in with the corn. These strange companions are most friendly, and the corn is much indebted to its neighbour, whose broad leaves protect its tender shoots from the heat of the sun, and, by preventing evaporation, retain the moisture in the ground. When the corn commences to throw out branches, the earth should be drawn round the roots, and

any weeds chopped away ; and when the cob shows itself, the weakest of the shoots are broken off, and only four or five of the finest allowed to remain. The feather also, when it begins to look brown and dead, should be pulled off, that all nourishment may go to the corn alone. It forms a most valuable food for both man and beast ; when ground ~~it~~ makes good pudding, used like flummery with milk, and most delicious cakes are baked from the meal ; the unripe tender green ears are also boiled, and eaten with melted butter, and remarkably good they are. It fattens oxen and pigs very rapidly ; and great care must be taken to have your fence in good order, for cattle will not stick at a trifle when they want to make a closer acquaintance with the appetising crop. Some oxen have a knack of finding a weak spot in any enclosure, and such beasts are a horrid nuisance both to their owner and to the neighbours ; they are called in Canadian parlance, “breachy cattle,” a term borrowed from the Yankees. Corn has many enemies besides. Master Bruin is fully alive to its merits, and will commit great havoc in a very short time ; racoons, squirrels, and birds also secure a fair share of it. When ripe in September, it is cut and saved in the following manner :—Armed with a sickle, or a sharp, short hoe, in the right hand, you put the left arm round the bunch growing on one hill, chop

it off close to the ground, and when two or three armfuls are got together, they are bound with a piece of stem to prevent their scattering, and set up on end like the shocks in an English wheat-field. After having stood a week or two, they are ready for the stripping operation, when a "husking frolic," or "bee," is called, and the hive, sitting in a circle, strip the husks from the ears, which are thrown into the centre, whilst the stalks are again tied into shocks and set up to become thoroughly dried, before being stacked for fodder. The ears are picked up in baskets made for the purpose, put into waggons, and drawn to cribs made of small sapling poles, in which they are stacked, with a slanting covering of bark or boards to shoot off the rain; or else they are braided on ropes like onions, and hung over beams in the granaries or barns. The shelling is usually performed by hand, but threshing with a flail is by far the most expeditious way, for one man can knock out over twenty bushels in a day. The husks make most excellent beds, used in the same way as feathers. I remember once recommending an Irishman in Australia to make himself one, and on my questioning him some days afterwards, he said that, far from his new bed being pleasant, he had hardly closed his eyes since—that it was like trying to sleep on lumps of stone; which was not unlikely to be the case, since

I found my innocent friend had stuffed his bed-tick with the husk, *cob and all* !

When the logs were prepared and in readiness, James called a "raising bee," which was promptly responded to by his few neighbours. The nearest settler was more than fifteen miles off, but as it is considered a point of honour to assist a new-comer, some seven or eight men assembled, two of them with yokes of oxen, and the shanty walls were raised by dusk. The foundation logs were quickly drawn into their places, and adjusted by handspikes at the correct distance from each other ; then came a shorter log for each end, notched to fit into the lower ones, and so on until the walls were finished. To get the logs up, skids are used ; these are stout saplings placed in a slanting direction, one end on the last-raised log, the other on the ground, and form an incline up which the new log can be rolled by handspikes, and by the assistance of ropes, used as a parbuckle.* When the wall becomes so high that handspikes are useless, the men lay them aside and arm themselves with forked saplings, by which means the heavy logs are soon landed in their position with safety, and in a space of time that would seem incredible to those unaccustomed to bush life. When the walls were

* A word used at sea for raising a balk of timber by undergirding it by ropes.

reared, and the men had eaten a hearty supper, they returned to their respective homes, for James and his party were sufficient to cover in the hut. The dimensions of his "shanty" were thirty feet by twenty, and eleven feet high in front, but only nine at the back, to give enough *pitch* to the roof to carry the rain off. The roof was composed of bass-wood troughs, the logs being first split fair in halves, and then hollowed out with the axe and adze—the latter of which is the most dangerous tool a man can take into his hands: an axe is a mere joke to it. A row of these troughs was then laid from the front or upper wall plate to the back plate, with the hollowed side uppermost. The covering troughs were then placed, with the hollow part downwards, and each edge resting in the centre of the under troughs; by which means a rather unsightly, but remarkably strong and completely water-tight roof was obtained.

But though the heavy part was now done, several more things were required to make the shanty habitable. A door and window had to be cut out and framed, and the door hung on wooden hinges; the interstices between the logs filled in with small branches and clay after the inside had been dubbed down smooth and level; and a chimney made. Some big stones piled round a corner and cemented with clay formed a fireplace, and the chimney was

of the most ancient order of architecture, being only a hole cut in the roof above the fire. By knocking up a rough table and a few forms, they were soon comfortable ; and the change to the shanty, which could be kept darkened, was a great relief after the tent, for it enabled them to escape in some measure from the black flies and mosquitoes. The latter are bad enough, but the black flies are very much worse. They appear about the end of May or the beginning of June, and although they only, happily, last a month, the damage and discomfort they produce in that short time is marvellous ; calves, fowls, and sheep often fall victims to their poisonous bite, and poor little children are seen with their necks one mass of sores. It must be remembered that only new country is subjected to these horrible little insects, and that directly the timber becomes in any degree cleared off they disappear. It is some small comfort to know that in the end they are themselves eaten up : a little dragon-fly comes on the stage towards the end of June, and makes very short work of them. At Bison there were none, and it was years since Henry had seen one on his farm.

As fast as any patch of ground was cleared it was sown with wheat, barley, or oats, according to the time of year. For a first crop all that is necessary is to break the surface with a home-

made instrument called a "crotch." This is formed of a fork of hard wood, about five inches in diameter in each arm. It will probably be easier for the reader to understand the instrument when I tell him that it exactly resembles the giant "merry-thought" of a chicken, only it is flat instead of being slightly curved. The two arms are squared with the axe, and on one face stout iron teeth are driven in to scarify the earth. A strengthening piece is sometimes added between the extremities of the arms, but it is better to have it strong enough to do without this, as it is liable to catch in small obstacles. This primitive apparatus being ready, you yoke a span of oxen on to it by a chain from the point where the arms join, and drag it up and down where you intend to sow. Though so remarkably simple, nothing that all Birmingham and Sheffield added together could produce would answer the purpose half so well. If it comes full swing against a stump it shoots off unhurt, where a plough would be crumpled up like an egg; if the teeth break, you hammer in new ones, and away you go again. Where the ground has been much knocked about by drawing timber or logging up, you need not even use this. Sowing the seed broadcast and harrowing it in is amply sufficient; indeed, not until the third crop is real ploughing required. In the meantime the beaver meadow

was producing a splendid crop of hay ; but as that would have to be given up to the cows and horses on their arrival, it was necessary to cultivate some artificial grasses elsewhere, for the natural pasturage of Canada is rank and coarse, and quite unsuited to either cattle or sheep. A small piece of cleared land was therefore fenced off and sown with Timothy grass (*Phleum pratense*), a kind most extensively used in Canada for the production of hay. Though a foreign species, it takes readily to the soil, and yields enormous crops, as much as three and a-half tons being often obtained from an acre. For reminding him of this, James was indebted to Henry, who had ridden over to pay him a visit. He was glad to see his friend again, and to hear about Nellie, for it seemed an age since he had seen her, and he was most anxious to have things sufficiently forward to admit of her coming to "The Beavers" before the winter set in. She wrote him a long letter, saying she had heard from George, who was getting on capitally in Queensland ; but that she was longing to rejoin him, for she was rather tired of the Smiths (the family with whom she had been staying since James's departure).

"And who do you think are going to settle in your part of the world?" the letter went on. "Well, I know, Jim, dear, you'll never *guess*—as

those horrid Smith girls always say—so I'll tell you at once. Do you remember Bessie Marsden on board the 'Zenobia'? Ah, I'm sure you do. And only fancy, her uncle has bought a piece of land on the opposite side of Lake Widgeon to 'The Beavers,' and passed through Bison a week ago on his way up with a party of men to clear it. I did not see him myself, but Ephraim J. Smith, as he delights to call himself, told me, in his abominable Yankee jargon, that 'he'd sighted the old critter down to Bison,' and that he, Ephraim J. Smith, 'kind o' reckoned he drank *some*.' I suppose Mr. Marsden had been treating his men, and was a little excited when Mr. Smith saw him; however, I thought you would like to know who were likely to be so near us. And now make haste, Jimmy, and send for me, for I shall make myself very useful, and then you'll be sorry you didn't have your silly little sister up sooner."

This letter gave James ample cause for meditation, and of no unpleasant nature, for he had been deeply smitten by Bessie Marsden's charms—even more so than his sister suspected or he felt inclined to admit, and the thought of having her again so near him was sufficient to kindle anew the embers of a love which had been only lying dormant. What sort of person her uncle was he did not know, for Bessie had never seen him herself, so could give

him no information on that point ; but Nellie's letter seemed to point to a tendency to excess, and James could not bear to think of Bessie coming in close contact with such a degrading vice.

“ Henry, I hear from Nellie that the Marsdens are settling on the other bank ; did you see anything of them when they passed through Bison ? ”

“ No ; he had gone before I visited the township ; but I heard them talking about him. His niece came out with you, didn't she ? Well, he has left her at Kingston until he has got up a place to hold her ; and, poor girl, I don't fancy she'll learn much good from him. They say he was in California during the height of the gold fever, and that he made a large fortune. I know he kept open house nearly at the 'Cosy Castors' during his stay in Bison, and was almost always the worse for drink ; and he seems to have plenty of money, for he has taken a strong gang of men up with him. But let us go over and see him, it's only five or six miles across.”

“ But how are we to get over ; I've no canoe.”

“ That is true ; but you must have one sooner or later, so we'll order a good birch-bark one from the Indians ; it won't cost much, and will be invaluable ; and in the meantime you and I will make a 'dug-out' which will ferry us over, and be useful afterwards for fishing and shooting.”

Accordingly, having chosen a fine straight-growing "butternut tree," it was soon felled, and eighteen feet of the trunk cut off, which they proceeded to fashion into a canoe of about two feet nine inches in breadth. James was very unskilful at this kind of work, but Henry had made many a one, and, under his skilful hands, a very pretty little craft soon appeared, so light that it could be easily carried between them, and in a few days all was in readiness for their contemplated trip.

Choosing a fine still morning, they launched the canoe, and with vigorous strokes of the paddle were soon speeding over the glassy surface of the lake. The appearance of some of the smaller Canadian lakes is truly beautiful on a calm morning, when the verdure-clad banks are reflected in the glassy water, which is so clear that, leaning over the side of your boat, every pebble on the bottom is distinctly seen, and the bass and salmon-trout, undisturbed by the passing canoe, dart to and fro unconscious of the presence of man. In an hour the opposite shore was reached, and then they searched about to find some traces of man. As it happened they made a lucky landfall, and had hardly penetrated a hundred yards into the interior before the ringing sound of the axe was heard, and the heavy thunder of falling trees indicated the proximity of those they sought. Old Marsden wel-

comed them cordially, and the advent of the newcomers seemed to give a colour to the much-longed-for excuse for "a drink," for, although it was only nine o'clock in the morning, all the men laid by their axes and accompanied their master and his guests to the tent, where their hearts were soon made glad with pannikins of whisky, served out with no sparing hand. Mr. Marsden was a tall sinewy old man, who must have been handsome in his youth, but whose features now bore a haggard and care-worn appearance, the result of mingled toil and dissipation. He seemed very nervous, like some one dreading, yet expecting, to hear evil tidings, and, pouring out half a tumbler of whisky, he drained off the fiery spirit before he seemed sufficiently braced up to ask any questions. By Henry's advice, both he and James mixed a little weak grog to keep the old man in a good temper; for Henry knew that a refusal to pledge him on first acquaintance would be regarded as a deadly insult, and make an enemy for James where it was most desirable he should have a friend.

"Well, boys, you're welcome," he said, filling up his glass and nodding to each of them. "I passed by your fixing, Mr. Hughes, when I was down to Bison side; and I have heard my niece speak a score of times of your sister, Mr. Fletcher. I hope when she comes up you'll let her come across

sometimes, and be neighbourly like, for it's a lonesome part this, 'most as lonesome as the Rocky Mountains; and if it wasn't for a little of my old friend here," and he tapped the whisky-keg, "I should sort o' lose heart, for I ain't the man I once was. Ah no! times alter, and I'm getting about played out now. I'll be ready for 'raising' in about a week, and should be glad of your assistance. There won't be no gals for you, lads, but I dare say we'll fix a frolic somehow."

Both James and Henry promised to come, and to bring a man; but, said Henry—

"How shall he get across, for our canoe won't carry three? Have you any Indians here, Mr. Marsden?"

"There's a small tribe of Chippewas close to," he replied.

"Well, Jim, we must go and persuade them to build us a good large birch-bark canoe, and then, if all goes well, you shall see us this day week, Mr. Marsden."

They then parted from the old man, and, regaining the dug-out, paddled down to the Indian village, to which they had been directed.

"Well, Henry, what do you think of old Marsden?"

"He seems to me to have something on his mind. Did you notice how nervous he was when

we first arrived? Now that couldn't be all drink; depend upon it, Jim, that old fellow has done something that he's afraid will get him into trouble. However, he seems well-disposed towards you, which is a great thing, for a rich and unscrupulous neighbour might cause a great deal of annoyance in various ways; and after all, this is only my own idea, and I may very likely be wrong.'

The Indians readily agreed to build a large canoe for a certain quantity of powder, shot, and other articles, and at Henry's suggestion several of them crossed over and took up their quarters at "The Beavers," for, as he justly remarked—

"Whilst they're so near old Marsden's whisky they'll manage to get at it somehow, and never do a stroke of work; but if we get them on our side we can keep an eye upon them, and they'll have it ready in time for the 'raising-bee,' at which we must be present; and besides, you'll see a bark canoe made, and there are many things less worth looking at than that."

In saying this Henry was right, for the turning out a good canoe is a very difficult operation, requiring a great deal of both skill and ingenuity, and, as perhaps the reader has never seen one, I shall describe the method of its construction amongst the Chippewas. The bark is taken from the white birch (*Betula papyracea*). At the proper

season, at which time it strips readily, a tree is selected of good size and sound bark—the greater the thickness and paler the colour the better for the purpose—and with much caution the covering is stripped off in one piece entirely round the tree, and somewhat longer than the intended canoe. This is removed to the frame already set up in the woods, and neatly fitted over it, the proper curvature of the bottom and sides being secured by elastic flat pieces of cedar, which are placed inside as ribs, and are attached at each end to the longitudinal pieces which make the gunwale. The bottom of a good canoe should always be of one piece, each end of which is turned up from the sides until they are contracted to a sharp point. To obviate the spreading of the centre portion which is caused by this contraction, wedge-shaped pieces are cut out from the outside edge towards the centre of the canoe on both sides, the widest part of the wedge being towards the upper edge of the bark. Sometimes the shape renders it necessary to add a gusset, which is done in the same manner, the incisions being brought together and sewn with thongs cut from the root of the cedar, and pitched over with tar and rosin, or with a pitch prepared from the gum of the balsam fir. Pieces of bark are then sewn to the upper edges of the bottom to complete the canoe to its required height,

and these upper edges are carefully trimmed to receive the false gunwale, which is composed of two thin strips of cedar bent round both the inside and the outside of the real gunwale, from stem to stern, and securely fastened at both ends. It is under these that the cedar ribs, half an inch thick by two inches in width, are placed, and their elasticity forces the bark into the proper form, and prevents the sides from collapsing. An upper gunwale is now firmly screwed, pinned, or nailed on to the outer edges of the false ones, and four thwarts made of hard wood, four inches broad and one in depth, are secured at equal distances across the canoe from gunwale to gunwale, strengthening the whole fabric, and removing all risk of its either bulging out or falling in. Birch canoes made of bark stripped in the winter are more durable than those made of "summer bark"; an experienced eye can distinguish them by the colour, and the former are of course more highly valued. Canoes of this kind may be seen of all sizes, from those which may be taken out of the water and carried by children, to those of thirty feet or more in length, in which ten or twelve people may undertake with safety a distant expedition. A canoe of sixteen or eighteen feet in length may be carried for miles by an Indian without any great exertion; and when placed again in the water it will carry

him and his squaw and papooses, with all their worldly possessions.

James was immensely pleased with the ingenuity displayed by the Chippewas, and the speed with which the work progressed, and, never having tried his hand in a bark canoe before—though he had become well accustomed to a dug-out while at Grassmere—he longed for the moment of launching, that he might exhibit his proficiency to the Indians.

“Take care, Jim!” shouted Henry, when the happy moment at length came, and James, paddle in hand, stood prepared to spring into the graceful vessel. “Take care, they’re rather lively until you get accustomed to them; you had better let Eaglehawk go with you.”

But the undaunted Jim despised this imputation on his adroitness, so, saying to Eaglehawk, the chief, who was holding the gunwale, “Let go,” he sprang in—sprang in, indeed, a good deal more than he had originally intended, for the buoyant craft slid away from under his feet more unexpectedly than if they had been planted on the smoothest ice, and remained tranquilly floating twenty yards off, while poor Jim came to the surface puffing, blowing, and heaping maledictions on Eaglehawk and all his tribe, the canoe, the country, and everything that either directly or by implication had the

least share in his disaster. Henry threw himself upon the ground convulsed with laughter, and even the Indian stoicism was not proof against the contagion, for they fairly screamed, and Jim had regained the bank before any one was sufficiently recovered to offer him the least assistance. He was standing, dripping, and looking very woeful in the mood between anger and amusement, when Henry came up, and between his fits of laughter, said—

“Well, Jim, how does she suit you?”

“She’s much *too* light,” murmured poor Jim, at which both Henry and the Indians were set off again, and he himself was forced to join them as the ludicrous aspect of the whole affair struck him.

“Never mind, Eaglehawk, I’ll get her,” said James; and plunging in again, he guided the empty canoe to the shore, and having changed his clothes, made another attempt, and this time, be it said, with perfect success.

No craft that float are so treacherous as bark canoes to a white man unused to their management; yet so perfectly do the Indians understand the art of balancing their weights, that in one of them they will ride fearlessly down the foaming rapids, or venture far out upon the salt water, where they may be seen spearing the blackfish and the porpoise, and, though dancing like a feather upon the waves, still managing to lift their bulky

and slippery carcasses into the frail barks, and return with them safely to the shore.

With Henry's help, James had been preparing the house for Nellie's reception, for not only did he want her, but she was evidently tired of being domesticated any longer with the Smiths, a Yankee family near Bison, who had taken her in consideration of a certain weekly sum for board and lodging. Another "shanty," though of smaller dimensions, had been built for the men, who had moved into it, leaving the large one vacant for improvement. First of all the floor, which by this time was roughly boarded over, was thoroughly cleaned; then a partition, dividing the house into two parts, was run up, and one of these parts again subdivided, by which means three rooms were obtained, not of any great size certainly, but still snug enough to pass the winter in. Silas Quidd had made his appearance with Henry's bullock-waggon loaded with useful furniture, and, what was most particularly wanted before the cold weather, a couple of good stoves, so that the temporary fireplace could be dismantled. Between them they really made the uncouth building very comfortable, and no one, looking at the rough logs with the outer bark still on, of which it was constructed, would ever have given it credit for the homely appearance it wore within. Henry was a

very fair carpenter, and had a happy knack of contriving little things which, if not indispensable, went a great distance in conducing to comfort. It need scarcely be said that he exerted his talents to the utmost for Nellie's benefit, and the night before old Marsden's "raising-bee," he said to Jim—

"I think you're about ready now; so after we get back from over the water—for I expect the old man will detain us a couple of days—you shall go down and bring Nellie up in the waggon, and I'll stay here and keep things straight during your absence."

CHAPTER VIII.

LEAVING our Canadian friends, we must now request our readers to follow us far across the ocean, where George is working out his portion of the emigrant life that we endeavour to portray.

With much creaking, cracking of whips, and foul language, the weary bullocks dragged the heavy drays up the steep little range that intervened before dropping down on the new town of Nashville at the Gympie Creek gold-diggings. Their advent was hailed with loud cheers from the assembled miners, for their freight consisted of the first quartz-crushing machine that energy and capital combined had determined to erect to extract the rich ore from the apparently inexhaustible reefs. The foremost dray, drawn by sixteen stout bullocks, carried the boiler, and lashed to the fore part of it was a staff with a new flag flying, on which was inscribed in white letters the words "Sanspareil Alliance"; the other drays to the number of eight followed in line, with the remainder of the machinery, and as

they wound through the straggling road that constituted the Nashville High Street, the hearts of the occupants of the scattered stores and shanties were glad within them, for they now saw wealth in the future; the richness of the locality had been recognised by capitalists, more machines would soon follow if this one were successful, and the steady flow of business occasioned by a permanent working would succeed to the fitful traffic of alluvial diggings.

The manager, who had arrived the previous day, and got everything in readiness for their reception, was in the little back room of the principal hotel, detailing their duties to a number of men just engaged, when the landlord put his head in, saying—

“The drays are in sight, Mr. Fletcher; shall I bring your horse round?”

“Yes, do,” replied George. “Now, my men, you know what I expect of you, and let me find you at work at seven sharp in the morning.”

Five years had passed away since we left George engaged as blacksmith and wheelwright to Mr. Dawson on Bendemeer sugar plantation—five years which had wrought a great change in him, both externally and in his position. For two years he had remained in his original capacity, and during that time had invested all his savings in land. The

first allotment that he had bought with the £50 presented to him by the owners of the "Happy Land" had proved most profitable. It was situated within two and a-half miles of Brisbane, on Tiffin Creek, and when an ice-manufacturing company had been floated, they pitched on this spot as most suitable for their new premises. After a good deal of negotiation, George transferred it to them for fifteen hundred pounds, one half money down, the other half in shares in the new undertaking. Instead of throwing up his employment on receipt of this large sum, he stuck to his work as sedulously as ever, improving his education by reading, and particularly by the study of engineering, for which he had always shown a great natural aptitude.

About this time a great misfortune befel Mr. Dawson. Whilst the process of sugar-making was going on, the engineer, who had half stupefied himself with rum, let the lighted ashes from his pipe fall amongst the highly inflammable "megass," and in a minute the whole building was in flames. The man lost his life, and Mr. Dawson lost his whole crop, and of the "works" hardly a stick was left standing, and though the buildings were insured, this had been effected when they were far less valuable; and though Mr. Dawson had given directions for a fresh policy to be prepared, the deed had not been completed when the catastrophe

occurred. He was in despair, and, whilst talking over the matter to George, whom he now looked upon quite as a friend, he mentioned that he should be obliged to take in a partner before he could afford to put the estate in working order again.

“How much do you want?” said George.

“I must have two thousand pounds, for which my new partner will have one-fourth of the profits as his share.”

“I’ve been thinking over what you were saying yesterday, Mr. Dawson,” said George, on meeting him the next morning, “and if you will have me, and my proposal suits you, I am willing to take a share in the plantation. I have got some money, but not as much as two thousand pounds; however, I can give you a thousand down, and guarantee the other thousand in a year. Of course I shall not remain on the plantation during the year, for I must make up the money, and I have an idea in my head, in the development of which you can be of great assistance to me. You know I’ve got some shares in the Ice Company? Well, they are paying over ten per cent. already, and are rising in value every day, so I don’t want to sell out in a hurry. In about six months, when the hot weather comes round again, they ought to be very high, and then I shall sell, most likely at a large profit. But

that is only by-the-way. My scheme is this: I don't know whether you ever study the Government gazettes; but I do, for I keep an eye on all the tenders, and I see that there are some open now for the construction of sundry bridges and culverts on the line of railway between Ipswich and Toowoomba. I went to the office when I was last in Brisbane, and looked at the specifications and plans, and I feel certain that I could do the work well, and make a good thing of it besides. Now I know that Mr. Mansfield, the engineer-in-chief, is a friend of yours, and if you accede to my proposal, I want you to give me a letter of introduction to him, and if I once secure an audience, I don't doubt but that I shall come off all right. If you'll be good enough to think it all over, will you let me know to-morrow morning, for I've got several bullock-bows to make now, before the team can drag the burnt wood away, and that idiot Martin ran the buggy against a stump yesterday and bent the axle?"

"No need for consideration, my dear fellow," replied Mr. Dawson, who had listened speechlessly to George's long harangue, "for you are the very man of all others I should have selected had I been left a choice; so here's my hand upon it, and I'll ride into Brisbane at once and tell old Dockett to draw out the deed of partnership. I am very sorry for one thing, that in gaining a partner I lose my

blacksmith; but I'll look about for another in Brisbane, or perhaps I'd better leave that to you. However, in the meanwhile, partner mine, you must straighten the axle and make the bows you were speaking of before doffing the leather apron for good, or we shall never get this charred rubbish cleared away. Thank Heaven! since my conversation with you I can look at it with a lighter heart than before."

"All right, sir; we'll have the team under weigh in an hour's time," replied the imperturbable George, turning to his forge, as if jumping at one bound from a blacksmith to a planter was an everyday matter.

I have no doubt that the idea of a servant proposing to his master that he shall enter into partnership with him may seem very strange to my English readers, but in Australia, far from such an event being unusual, it is one of constant occurrence. The boundaries between "castes" are much less clearly defined, even if they have any existence, and in a very brief space men with any real talent in them come naturally to the front, and assume a new position in the social scale, and one the more lasting as it has been won by individual talent, integrity, or good conduct. Very many of the most respected inhabitants of the great Australian continent commenced life almost penniless, and

have, by sheer strength of character and merit, worked out for themselves their present exalted position. It is nothing unusual to hear a minister, who sways the destiny of a whole colony, talk, without the slightest particle of false pride, of the day that he landed without a pair of shoes to his feet. The truth is, that steadiness and perseverance will always win the day against brains and flightiness. If to the perseverance you can add the brains, so much speedier the ultimate result; but all the talent in the world without steadiness is thrown away. It is the old fable of the hare and the tortoise, and the finale is ever the same. I have seen the man of education lose his money, his position, and his self-respect, whilst the illiterate shepherd that he once employed rose to wealth and power. These changes are for ever taking place in a colony, and you never know in what position you may next meet a steady man, though you may rest tolerably certain where the flighty man is likely to remain. One of the causes of this is, that any kind of work, manual or otherwise, is not regarded as a thing to be ashamed of, but, on the contrary, as a deed of which you have just reason to be proud. The better carpenter, blacksmith, or sawyer a man is, the greater addition is he to a young community, where, if he can make a table or shoe a horse, people care very little whether he was a Senior Wrangler

at Cambridge or a simple ploughboy in Dorsetshire. From this the reader will see that a sudden elevation such as George's carries with it none of the unpleasant consequences that a similar occasion would give rise to in England : from being one of the employed he had risen by his own good conduct to be an employer, and it was regarded as a very natural and perfectly legitimate consequence.

After the deed of partnership had been signed and sealed, George went to Ipswich, carrying with him a letter to Mr. Mansfield, with whom he had a very satisfactory interview. He next carefully inspected the places where the contemplated bridges were to be built, and having satisfied himself that he could fulfil the terms, tendered forthwith for the contract, which, after a little delay, was accepted, and then set himself to the fulfilment of his task. By giving liberal wages, and exercising constant personal supervision, the work was performed within the allotted time, and done in such a manner as to call down loud encomiums from the engineer-in-chief, and led to other and larger contracts being entrusted to his management. As he had foreseen, the Ice Company's shares had gone up considerably and he had sold out at a large profit, which enabled him to hand over at once the remaining thousand pounds to Mr. Dawson. At his suggestion also the "works" at Bendemeer were built on a much larger

scale, and more land put under cane. He had not resided much at the latter place, for the various contracts he had on hand in different parts of the colony made his presence in constant demand, and his time was much taken up in travelling from place to place. A great many new sugar plantations were being established in the north on the Mackay River and elsewhere, and he obtained several commissions for the purchase and erection of machinery on these, which yielded him a good return. It was on his way back from executing a work of this kind at Maryborough that curiosity led him to pass through the Gympie Diggings, where he first saw the rich veins of ore that ran through the quartz reefs. Hearing some of the miners remark that men of capital ought to send up machinery to crush the stone, the idea at once took root in his fertile brain, and before many weeks had passed the "Sanspareil Alliance Quartz-crushing Company, Limited," sprang into existence, and, by unanimous agreement, he was appointed working manager with a good salary, by which his appearance at Gympie in the beginning of the chapter is accounted for.

Under the supervision of the energetic manager, the machinery was soon in its place, and great was the excitement throughout the whole community at the news that the first crushing was to take place

on the following day. The miners all left their claims and crowded down to the creek on which the machinery was placed. A loud cheer rose when the dull sound of the heavy stampers was first heard, and when later on the result of the first assay was made known as over fourteen ounces to the ton, the shouts of the delighted shareholders rent the air.

All my readers must know that gold is found in or near quartz. Perhaps this is not the most correct geological language to couch my statement in, but nevertheless for our purpose it is quite near enough. That which is found in the rock itself traverses the veinstones with strings of gold, which seem to tie the mass together, and in some specimens the quartz is so rich that the gold occupies the greater bulk. In other cases, owing to the minuteness of the particles, it is invisible to the eye, and is only discovered by chemical processes. By the disintegration and crumbling away of the rocks which contain the auriferous veins, the contents of these are washed or swept down to lower levels, the gold by its density keeping ever the lowest place amongst the moving materials. Thus are produced the auriferous gravel deposits in alluvial formations and the golden sands in the rivers; and so for long ages past they have been gathering and forming deposits, some of which are now seen

in situations apparently out of the reach of such agencies. In these deposits, when stripped of the clay and sand which cover the lowest and richest layer, or the "wash dirt," as it is termed in digger parlance, there is found in the irregular shaped cavities of the surface of the rock, in pockets and in piles against projecting ledges, the riches of ancient veins, it may be of vast extent. The obtaining this kind of gold is called "alluvial digging"; the dirt is all removed until the "wash-dirt" which rests on the rock is reached, and then by various methods of washing away the intermixed earthy and stony matters the precious metal is left behind in dust, flattened scales, small lumps, and nuggets of all sizes and shapes, the larger pieces rounded by attrition, or the action of water, or ragged from the irregular forms they held in the original hard quartz matrix. Many nuggets have been found of several pounds weight, but in the Imperial School of Mines at St. Petersburg there is one, found in the Southern Ural in 1842, weighing ninety-six lbs. The "Blanche Barkly" nugget, which was exhibited in London, weighed 146 lbs. 3 dwts., of which six ounces only were estimated as matrix; and a still larger one was discovered at Ballarat, in Victoria, which weighed 184 lbs.! Not a bad morning's work for the lucky finders. But the gold that George wishes to extract is embedded

in the solid quartz, and the method of obtaining it is as follows :—

After the stone has been excavated from the earth by blasting or some other process, it is transported to the crushing-mill, where it is pulverised. This is done by stampers, the heads of which are solid blocks of the very hardest cast-iron, made with faces about seven inches square, and a length of ten inches, besides the hollow shell which forms the upper end for the reception of the stamp leg—a long square stick of the strongest timber, of the same size as the head. Each stamper should weigh about four hundred pounds, but of course they vary a great deal; in California they are used double that weight. A number of these are set in a frame to work side by side, as they are raised in turn by cams attached to a revolving shaft in front of them. If, reader, you have ever seen a pile-driver at work, you will be able to form a very fair estimate of the part the stampers play. They beat upon cast-iron anvils embedded in massive timber, and a current of water is kept flowing under them whilst at work. The water finds its way through the grates, or sheets of copper perforated with small holes, which form one end of the boxing, or wooden enclosure, around the lower end of the stampers. These holes are the only exit for the materials crushed by the stampers, and their size regulates the fineness of

the work. A box is built in front of each set of grates, and kept closely covered to prevent the scattering of the mud and water as these are forced through by the violent action of the stampers. In these boxes is a groove in the floor in front of the grate, in which the coarse gold is caught. The water flows out of the box by a wooden spout which discharges into an open trough ; and in this a piece of baize is laid to secure more of the metal. The current containing the sediment is now led to the shaking-tables, where by means of quicksilver the last of the gold is extracted. The shaking-tables are swinging platforms, each one made of a single piece of plank seven or eight feet long, and as wide as can be procured, it being important in all floors for collecting gold to avoid introducing cracks or divisional joints. The plank should not be less than two inches thick, and from a line across the middle it should be worked down till at one end it comes to an edge ; and from the other end, which retains its full thickness, it should be worked down towards the middle line, till only about half-an-inch thickness is left. It is strengthened by sides of board about six inches high, and another similar strip is joined perfectly tight across the back or thin end. The table is then swung between four uprights in a perfectly horizontal position by four rods or chains at least eight feet long ;

and mercury is poured into each of the two divisions until they are more than half-filled. A trough for conveying the sediments is then placed so as to discharge the current upon the back end directly into the greatest depth of mercury. Each table is now connected with a short crank upon a revolving shaft, so that with every turn it is made to vibrate backwards and forwards. As it thus swings, the sediments swept over the surface of the mercury are shaken together to mix with it, and propelled in successive waves over the division across the middle upon the next surface of mercury, where the same action is repeated, and the current of mud and water escapes over the end, while the weight of the mercury prevents it from flowing over. All the particles are thus brought into close contact with the mercury, and no gold is likely to escape unless protected by a covering of earthy matter. Such is the process ordinarily adopted to obtain the precious metal from the quartz reefs, though on large and long-established gold-fields the machinery is much more complex than that brought up by the "Sanspareil Alliance" as an experiment.

Before long George had under his charge a large quantity of gold, and as an escort had not yet been established, he determined to take it to Maryborough himself. Travelling with a large sum is by

no means a pleasant undertaking, for there are no lack of bad characters at a diggings, who would not hesitate to do a little moonlight business if the opportunity fell in their way. Several men had been "stuck-up"—the colonial phrase for highway robbery—and eased of their hardly-gained earnings, and altogether the road was not looked upon as particularly safe. It would, however, never do to keep the gold locked up until the Government thought fit to provide a guard, so George, who was young, venturesome, well armed, and well mounted, resolved to convey it to its destination himself. He took every precaution he could think of, sending out a black boy with his best horse during the night, with directions to meet him outside the town at daylight, and not to say to whom the horse belonged, should any one question him. He also in the course of conversation took care to let drop that he had determined to await the escort, which he had written down to the Government to expedite. The night before starting, he waited until every one was asleep, and then sewed some of the gold into a chamois-leather belt he wore round his waist next to the skin, and the remainder he concealed carefully in his saddle-bags. He next looked to his revolver, removed the old caps and replaced them by thoroughly dry new ones. All being now prepared, he strolled outside for a minute

or two to see that nobody was lurking about, and then turned round to re-enter the house. He fancied he saw a figure or a shadowy form disappear near a deep hole over which the miners had erected a windlass, but on walking briskly up to it and finding nothing except a stray horse in hobbles picking up a scanty feed amongst the down-trodden pasture, he made sure that his eye had deceived him. He noticed, however, what he had not thought of before, that the light from his lamp shone brilliantly through the chinks in the slab-room, so much so as to be remarkable at such a late hour, and on applying his eye to one of the cracks he found no difficulty in seeing the whole interior of the apartment. "Never mind," he thought, "it's only the old nag in hobbles, everybody else is too tired to knock about at this time of night, and I'd better turn in myself, for I have got a long journey before me to-morrow."

At daylight he was up and, mounting the cob that carried him to and fro from his house to the mill, rode quietly over the ridge as if going to the latter as usual, the few people he met giving him the customary good morning. But when he had topped the ascent he struck the spurs into the amazed old horse, and, making a considerable detour, arrived without having seen a human being at the spot he had appointed for the black boy to

await him. Pickwick was in readiness with the horse, but was evidently in the same condition as his renowned namesake when Captain Boldwig's servant wheeled him to the pound.

"Why, Pickwick, what fellow been made you like it drunk?" asked George, in the peculiar language in which the whites communicate with the tame blacks.

"White fellow been ride along; budgereee fellow that: cobbon rum he been give mine," replied Pickwick.

"That fellow yabber plenty questions?" asked George.

"'My word!' he been say, 'that fellow yarroman belonging Marmy Fletcher. You go 'long with him?' Mine say 'baal.' He ask, 'Suppose any fellow go messmate long of Marmy?' Mine say, 'Youwi plenty fellow go.' Then he give me nother fellow ball, and ride away like it Gympie."

But as the reader is very unlikely to understand this gibberish, I had better translate the conversation into English:—

"Who has been giving you liquor?"

"A white man passed; a very good fellow, for he gave me plenty of rum."

"Did he ask you any questions?"

"Yes, he said he recognised the horse as yours, and asked me if I was going with you. I told him no, and he then asked who was going to accom-

pany you, and I told him several people ; he then gave me some more grog and rode off in the direction of Gympie."

George was terribly annoyed at hearing this ; but he was too right-minded to vent his anger on the staggering black wretch, whose love for liquor had caused him to forget the injunctions to keep silent, laid upon him by his master. Hastily shifting the saddle from the cob to his favourite horse, Bronzewing, he was soon speeding on his way towards Maryborough.

"I must pull right through, getting a remount at the police camp. Bronzewing ought to cover sixty miles by five o'clock ; so come along, old man."

Thus muttering, George settled down in his seat, and the willing horse was soon carrying him at a hand-gallop that seemed to bid defiance to all pursuit. He did not think it advisable to follow the road closely for the first part of the journey, so made his way through the bush about a mile from it, but in a parallel direction ; but on reaching the creek, on which a small sheep-station was built, he stopped at the house to rest his horse for a while and have some breakfast. Hearing that no suspicious characters had been seen about lately, he determined to make the remainder of the journey by the road, which would be much easier travelling for his horse ; and after he had left the

sheep-station five miles behind him all anxiety had vanished, for he made sure he was beyond all danger. Moderating his pace, therefore, he proceeded more quietly, until he came to Sandy Creek, on each bank of which stood a belt of thick scrub, through which the dray road had been cut. Whilst down in the bed of the creek, and allowing his horse to take a few mouthfuls of water, he heard a shrill whistle, and on looking round saw himself covered by two carbines, whilst three other men were descending the bank, the foremost of whom shouted the ominous words, "Bail up; throw your hands up."

This term is taken from the Australian dairy, where all the cows are fastened between two bars when about to be milked. The bail confines their heads, and effectually prevents all advance or retreat. From this it came to be applied to anything or anybody brought to bay, driven into a corner, or stopped by some unforeseen impediment, and lastly the term became in vogue amongst bush-rangers, and all bushmen know that mischief is meant when the unwelcome order reaches their ear. Throwing the hands up is another ceremony that these rascals compel their victims to perform, for while the arms are held thus in the air the captive is entirely at the mercy of his despoilers, who shoot him without hesitation should he attempt to lower them.

How bitterly George now regretted his rashness, but it was too late ; he was caught like a rat in a trap, for two more carbine muzzles peeped out from the scrub in his front, and he could do nothing but surrender. "What, and lose all the gold ! No," muttered George, "I'll die first. By Heaven, I'll try the bed of the creek !" And as the thought flashed through his mind he wrenched Bronzewing's head up from the water in which his muzzle was still immersed, and, jamming in the spurs, the startled animal gave a furious bound, which saved his rider's life, for the bullets that would have gone straight to their mark now whistled idly by, and, indignant at the unwonted punishment, madly galloped up the bed of the watercourse. Other shots followed, but without effect ; and now hold on, good Bronzewing, and there is a chance yet. The bushrangers had planted their horses in the scrub, and some minutes elapsed before they could extricate them and mount in pursuit, during which time George had gained a considerable distance in advance. But though his horse was a real good one, it was struggling with great disadvantages. He himself was no light weight, and the heavy gold he carried added enormously to the burden. Besides, the sand was deep ; the gallant steed sank over its fetlocks at each stride, and as George was a stranger to the country, he did not know how long he would

have to continue in the body of the watercourse before the bank became sufficiently clear of scrub to allow him to gain the firm and open ground. Meanwhile, the only thing was to press onwards, and trust that an opening would appear in the leafy wall before his enemies came in sight. And nobly his good steed responded to the call.

Onward for what appeared miles, now ploughing through heavy sand, now scattering the rough shingles like grape-shot, now plunging through water-holes breast high, and still the chances of escape from the creek seemed as distant as ever. Such a pace could never be maintained; even now there was a sensible diminution in Bronzewing's speed. The sharp "ping" of a bullet, as it rang by his head, announced that his enemies had viewed him, and, half turning in his saddle, he saw that the shot came from a well-mounted miscreant who was at least a hundred yards ahead of his fellows, and evidently gaining on him, for the bad ground and enormous weight told heavily against George.

"Bail up, or I'll fire," hailed the bushranger, shortening the distance between them at each bound, and already the reins were dropped on his horse's neck, and the carbine raised, when George, muttering, "God forgive me," pulled suddenly up, and, before the sharp crack of his revolver died away in the scrub, he was dashing onwards again,



whilst a riderless horse was galloping madly behind him.

The yell of the robbers as they passed the dead body of their comrade struck like a death-knell on George's ears, for, unless he could lighten him, he saw that Bronzewing could not hold out much longer. "Hurrah!" he shouted, as a thought struck him, which he at once prepared to carry into execution. Unfastening the gold-belt round his waist, he slipped it into one of the saddle-bags, and when a few minutes afterwards the over-weighted horse was struggling through a water-hole, by the side of which lay the carcase of a dead bullock, he unbuckled the girth that secured the saddle-bags, and when as nearly as he could judge the centre of the hole was reached, without pulling up, he quietly slipped them off the saddle, when they disappeared without leaving a trace.

"Now," thought George, "I can laugh at the scoundrels; even if they catch me, which is very unlikely, they won't find as much booty as will recompense them for their trouble, and the dead bullock forms a landmark by which I can always recover my gold. Come, old boy, on again, you'll go lighter now," he said, patting Bronzewing's dripping neck, who already showed by increased speed the immense relief afforded by the absence of the heavy weight.

Still onward, past the little islands of graceful shey oak; past the water-holes, into which the timid platypus plunged headlong, and the black duck betook him hastily to flight, scared by the intrusion of the wild fugitive on their quiet domain; past many a turning and winding of the creek, but ever the same barrier of dense scrub rising sombre and impenetrable on either bank, and affording no prospect of escape for the hunted horseman. The sun poured down its fierce rays upon the sandy bed, blinding to the eye and suffocating to the labouring chest; but still onward, onward! no slackening of bridle, no sparing of the cruel spur, for death followed unrelentingly in his wake, hounded on by fiends in human form, to whom mercy was unknown.

The gallant horse still bore his rider a furlong ahead of the foremost robber, though every now and again a carbine shot, discharged at random, ploughed up the sand close to the fugitive. What if a stray ball should strike either rider or steed? and as the thought flashed across him, George's stout heart sunk within him. But courage! he had rounded another reach in the creek, and glimpses of light became visible in the jungle; another half-mile, and an opening appeared, welcome as ever was harbour of refuge to the tempest-tossed mariner. Encouraged by voice and hand, Bronze-wing struggled up the crumbling bank, and, closely

followed by the riderless horse, dashed through the thicket, where the pendant "lawyers"* dislodged the fugitive's hat, and lacerated his flesh with their hook-like thorns. The firm ground was gained, and galloping became easier.

"If I could only get the bushranger's horse to take another direction before they came in sight," thought George, "they would not know which of the tracks was mine, and would have to split into two parties to follow each."

The bush was dotted with small patches of the beautiful silver-leaved brigalow, and one of these intervened between him and his pursuers, when, acting on this idea, George drew his revolver, and, turning round in his saddle, flashed the pistol near the head of the riderless horse, which was following close in his rear. With a snort of pain, the terrified animal dashed away at right angles, while George, taking advantage of every yard of cover afforded by the friendly brigalow, branched off in a different direction. The distant shout of the perplexed bushrangers faintly reached him, as the keen eye of the foremost detected the divergence of the tracks.

* A species of cane found in the Queensland scrubs, the husky covering of which is covered with multitudes of prickles, resembling inverted fish-hooks. The slender tendrils thrown out from the parent stem are armed in a similar manner, and, despite their diminutive size, are strong enough to tear a horseman from the saddle.

“So far the plan has answered,” he muttered ; “but we must on, good horse, until we reach the ranges.”

Swiftly but carefully the fearful ride for life was continued, and for several miles the fugitive speeded on unwitting of the direction, and only conscious that he was nearing the Wombat Ranges. A little creek was reached, in which the water lay calm and glass-like under the blazing sun, and here—first listening attentively to catch the slightest sound—he dismounted, drank copiously of the pure element, and bathed the head and ears of his wearied horse, whose heaving flanks and distended nostrils attested the severity of the ordeal. But Bronzewing suddenly pricked his ears : his keen senses had detected the sound of approaching hoofs ; and now, onward again. George wondered that his head swam so, that in placing his foot in the stirrup he reeled and nearly fell ; but once in the saddle, both rider and steed pressed forward, invigorated by the short rest. And now their wild career led them through stony ridges, thinly sprinkled with dwarf iron-bark trees ; through plains on which the herbage grew dense and matted, and the grass-tree sent forth its spear-like shaft to heaven, and where the wild dog slunk away from its half-devoured prey, the stupid emu swung itself out of sight, and the mild-eyed kan-

garoo, with giant bounds, sought an undisturbed retreat.

“My brain is on fire,” thought George; “pray God that my senses do not leave me,” he added aloud, as he found himself with difficulty able to restrain an intense longing to sing and shout.

“Fool that I am, my head has been uncovered!” and, letting fall the reins, he attempted to tear off his shirt and to wrap it round his head. But the mischief had been done—the excitement, and the sun beating on his exposed head, had together affected the brain; and with a mad laugh he flung away the strip of flannel he had torn off, and dashing the spurs into the jaded horse, pressed him over all obstacles, yelling and shouting, and heedless, if conscious, of any danger. From time to time he experienced a lucid interval; and who but those who have undergone a similar calamity can picture the agony of the sufferer in his futile efforts to keep reason steadily on her throne?—the clenched teeth, and the firm resolve by sheer strength of will to drive back the coming paroxysm—resolves at which the fire-demon laughs in scorn, as he hurls reason anew from her seat, and urges the frenzied victim to greater extravagances.

All fear of pursuit had long passed, for no sane man would have ventured at speed over the ground taken by George; and long before nightfall, the

bushrangers, disappointed and baffled, with one of their number killed and their cattle completely knocked up, had dismissed all intention of following him further, and had betaken themselves to their fastness in the broken country, to elude the pursuit that they knew must inevitably follow when George was missed. They had arrived at a correct conclusion as to his state of mind, for on coming to a steep, rocky descent, down which George had evidently pushed his horse at headlong speed, the foremost bushranger drew rein, and, on his companions joining him, said—

“Look here, mates, there ain’t no use in following the cove no farther, because he’s just raving mad. No man as wasn’t cranky would head down that gully, and no horse that hadn’t a madman on his back would go. So we’d better try back, bury that fool Jobson, and then plant ourselves until things are quiet again.”

“Bury Jobson!” answered another of the gang; “let him feed the dingoes and hawks. His cursed body will bring down the traps on us, as sure as fate; and if we stop to put his useless carcase under ground, they’ll be on us before we get planted. No, no, let him rip; and the sooner we get to cover the better.”

CHAPTER IX.

A TRAVELLER dismounted at the entrance of the Royal Hotel at Maryborough, and hanging his horse up outside, called to the waiter to get him a bath and to have some dinner ready for him in half-an-hour.

“By-the-bye,” he added, “where is Mr. Fletcher, of the ‘Sanspareil Alliance,’ putting up?”

“Don’t know, sir; I didn’t know Mr. Fletcher was in town, sir; always uses our house, sir; but I’ll ask the landlord, sir.”

“Very odd what can have become of Fletcher,” said Mr. Selwyn, a large squatter near Gympie, who, having finished his dinner, had gone to the bank, and to other places that George was known to frequent, but without gaining any tidings of him. He was now talking to the police magistrate, who seemed much struck at George’s non-arrival.

“You’re sure he left Nashville the day before yesterday?”

“Sure!” replied Selwyn, “of course I am; I’ve got his boy Pickwick with me, who seems as anxious about his master as a black ever is, and

says that a man inquired about the number of companions Fletcher would have on his journey. I know also that he took all his gold with him, and altogether, Bingham, I don't half like the look of it. Fletcher is such a punctual fellow, and with the responsibility of so large a sum on his shoulders he would be most unlikely to linger. If he doesn't turn up this evening I shall lay it before you in your official capacity, and ask for the troopers to scour the country."

"My dear fellow," replied Bingham, "I hope you are mistaken; but I'll readily do all in my power to help Fletcher, although I must say I think it exceedingly rash in him to set out in that way."

Evening came, but brought with it no sign of the missing manager, and the next morning Mr. Selwyn, armed with a letter from the police-magistrate to the inspector of police, and accompanied by Pickwick, was on his way to the native police barracks, which were situated on the Gympie road, some seven miles from Maryborough.

This most useful force consists of a certain number of aboriginal blacks, who are broken in to the use of arms, and whose services are in constant requirement to check the predatory propensities of their wild brethren. Unsited as the natives of Australia are to any occupation requiring their

continual presence in one spot, and impossible as it has been found to introduce into their ranks even the rudiments of civilisation, the love of hunting their fellows seems to overcome their dislike to a fixed residence, and they readily band together for that purpose, becoming, under the tutelage of the European, a most efficient force for the repression and punishment of crime among the savage tribes that wander through the pathless bush, and who without their agency would in most cases escape undetected. Detachments of from ten to twelve of these mounted troopers are distributed in various parts of the colony, under the charge of two white officers to each party. Their dress is a simple shell-jacket and trousers, and their weapons a double-barrelled carbine, in the use of which they excel. From time to time they patrol the district, overawing the "Myalls," as the wild blacks are called, and bringing them to account should they have committed any mischief. For the purposes required of them they answer most admirably, for they are obedient to command, patient under hardship, brave, and faithful. Excess of zeal may sometimes make them too blood-thirsty for our more civilised ideas, but in such a wild country this can hardly be avoided, and the atrocities they avert more than compensate for the isolated cases of rigour that have sometimes occurred.

Mr. Dixon, the inspector, welcomed Selwyn most cordially, and listened with great attention to his statement and the fears he expressed concerning George.

“ Well, certainly, it does look curious, but we’ll soon clear it up. Mr. Sharp, send out for the horses, and tell off six men for duty. Fill their pouches up with cartridges, and get some beef on the fire at once. Come in to breakfast, Selwyn ; we’ll be in the saddle in a couple of hours.”

The first of the troopers who descended into the bed of Sandy Creek, at the crossing where George had been “ bailed up,” throwing himself out of the saddle, shouted out, “ Look at this fellow, Marmy,” whilst he held up to Dixon and Selwyn a riding-whip he had just picked up.

“ By Jove, it’s Fletcher’s ! see, here are his initials. Come, boys, look about you, there has been something wrong here ” ; but before he ceased speaking the keen-eyed blacks had read the whole history in the sand as we should in a book.

“ He been go like it up creek ; plenty other fellow been chase him,” said Jimmy, the corporal ; and the whole party turned their horses in that direction, and following the hoof-prints, ran up the bed of the watercourse.

“ My word ! some fellow dead there,” said a trooper, pointing to the cloud of carrion crows and

hawks that got up from a distant object, which on nearing they discovered to be the body of a man. A sickly fear lest it might be poor George caused Mr. Selwyn to avert his eyes, and the relief was great when Pickwick confidently asserted that the body was not his master's, for the dress was quite different.

"Well, Fletcher made short work of one of his pursuers," remarked Dixon; "but we must push on, we can't afford time to bury this fellow; in fact, the rawks have nearly half done that already."

Hanging up by the puggree with which it was surrounded, George's pith helmet was found in the opening of the scrub, and recognised in a moment by them all. The place where the bushranger's horse had diverged was soon reached, and here the trail split into two. The black boy, Pickwick, dismounted, and, going down on his knees, examined every inch of ground with the greatest care. After about ten minutes, during which the rest anxiously awaited the result, he jumped up, and pointing to a footprint, said—

"That fellow track belonging to Bronzewing."

Confident in the boy's sagacity, the trail was again eagerly followed, and just as the sun sank behind the range they arrived at the little water-hole where George had dismounted to breathe his horse.

The moment the returning light permitted them to discern the tracks, the party was again in the saddle, and before long the piece of flannel was found, and they were hurrying on with renewed anxiety. Presently the steep gully was reached where the bushrangers had given up the pursuit, and again Pickwick distinctly stated that the solitary horse that had gone onwards was Bronze-wing. Dixon was here in a great dilemma: if he looked for George the robbers would make good their escape; and yet to allow him to starve in the wilderness was impossible. So, leaving the horses under charge of two troopers, they followed up the trail on foot, for the ground was so bad that riding would have lost time. Suddenly the corporal touched his officer on the arm, and pointed to the sky far away. With the powerful binocular glasses he carried, Dixon made out what had been patent to the black's keener vision—a train of circling hawks, harbingers of ill, whose presence always so forcibly recalls the text of “where the carcass is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.” As a bushman, he knew that something newly dead must be lying there, so, directing the troopers to continue following the track, he, Selwyn, and Jimmy, started straight for the spot. As they drew nearer the loathsome birds were seen sitting on every tree, with gorged bodies and drooping wings, while some

that were perched on a ledge of rock in front seemed too heavy to fly. The suspense was now intolerable, for beyond that ledge evidently lay the mystery, and each dreaded the sad spectacle he expected to see. Jimmy, however, walked on boldly to the brink, and making use of the favourite expression among the troopers, "My word!" swung himself down out of sight of the others, who, summoning their resolution and looking downward, saw him leaning over the half-picked body of poor Bronzewing, but of George there was no sign. The body of the horse was lying at the base of a small cliff with a sheer descent of more than thirty feet, over which he had been evidently forced by his rider, for on examining the ledge the print of his hoof where he took off for the leap was plainly seen. The fall had broken the horse's back; but where was his rider? It seemed incredible that he should have escaped unhurt from such a shock, but then the fact was staring them in the face—he was not there. They were both about to clamber down the declivity, but Jimmy wouldn't hear of it.

"Suppose you come down here, your big fellow boots spoil track," he said, and his idea was so evidently right that they coo-eh-ed for the others to hurry up, and sat down until their arrival.

"Hadn't we better fire a volley—it would attract

him if he is anywhere within hearing distance?" said Selwyn.

"In his present state he is much more likely to fancy it is his enemies," replied Dixon; "no, no, better wait till the others come up, and if they don't find him nothing will."

"But they can never follow the track of a man on foot over bare rocks!"

"If any people in the world can do it, they can. And so you'll see. Ah, here they come."

After looking over the ledge for a moment, the bare-footed troopers dropped down to where all that remained of poor Bronzewing lay, and an earnest consultation followed in their own language. Presently Syntax, a noted tracker, called the others, when they knelt down and examined a stone he pointed out, and in a minute afterwards Jimmy told Dixon and Selwyn to descend, and when they joined, Syntax triumphantly drew attention to the stone, which appeared to the Englishmen no different from dozens of similar rocks by which they were surrounded, but which the boys all unanimously declared was the missing man's track. And now steadily and slowly the blacks applied themselves to unravelling this knotted skein. With caution yet confidence they crept along for more than a mile, and yet no sign had appeared that gave the white men the faintest clue whether they

were correct in their assertions. In the most extraordinary way the phantom trail twisted and wound about, now turning abruptly backwards, now winding round in a semicircle. At last Syntax, who was leading, pointed to the ground with a grin of exultation, and there sure enough was the unmistakable print of a boot in the soft earth between two boulders. Convinced of the marvellous acuteness of the troopers, the two Englishmen now watched with increasing anxiety the deciphering of the minute traces, imperceptible to their eyes as is the flight of a bird through liquid air, but which to the untutored savage showed plainly and unmistakably the devious wanderings of the missing man. The dry bed of a watercourse was shortly reached, and from amidst the boulders, with a loud shout, the trackers produced a boot, whilst the scattered sand showed where the unhappy George, conscious in his delirium of a burning thirst, had torn up the arid bed of the creek in a futile effort to find water.

“Close up now, mine think,” said Syntax, and, following the dry channel, they proceeded at a rapid pace, scraps of flannel, shreds of linen, and frequent footprints indicating that the object of their search could not be far distant.

“It seems a happy sign that there are no hawks about,” said Dixon.

“Poor Fletcher, how he must have suffered from

thirst!" remarked Selwyn, pointing down to a fresh place where the sand was thrown about, and the marks of the hands as they had tremblingly clutched the parched dust and scraped it away until the bare rock appeared, were plainly visible.

Reader, have you ever suffered from thirst? The costly paraphernalia invented with such diabolical ingenuity by the Inquisition—the rack, the crushing boot, the maiden's treacherous embrace—were but time and money thrown away. No torture that human skill could ever devise can approach in its duration to the agonies of thirst. Under protracted physical suffering the senses are in mercy taken away, and unconsciousness affords a semblance of relief, or the nervous system, shattered by the shock, refuses to suffer more; but with thirst the agony lasts as long as breath remains to the victim. For days the torment endures, never relaxing, ever increasing, the distorted imagination lending keener pangs to the dread reality—for nothing can alienate the mind from dwelling on sparkling brooks and cool delicious draughts of phantom beverages. Nay, the eye itself adds to the hideous mockery, spreading to the sufferer's view calm and vast lakes, the combined effect of a highly rarefied atmosphere and an overwrought brain. Truly priestly cruelty might have spared itself the fabrication of ghastly engines when nature

placed within their reach torment more awful than any their most ardent zealot could ever have devised.

Beside a huge mass of rock, prone on his back, with the matted locks mingling with the burning sand, his eyes, protruding and bloodshot, fixed upon space, and his cracked lips black and peeling, guarded by three lank native dogs eager to commence their hideous repast, and who slunk away with many a snarl and backward glance, the leading troopers found George Fletcher.

"Thank God he breathes yet!" cried Dixon, bending over the body and feeling the heart, whilst the light piece of down placed upon the baked lips showed by a tremulous movement that life still lingered within.

"Put this between his lips," and carefully and tenderly a rag, soaked in weak rum-and-water, was introduced, while the soft sand, covered with a handkerchief, was scraped into a pillow for the head, and a trooper, cutting the centre shoot of a dwarf cabbage-tree, formed it into a fan and poured a grateful current of air upon the sufferer's forehead.

"Rig up a gunyah, you other boys," said Dixon; and with their sheath-knives the willing blacks slashed down the boughs of the shey-oak, and formed a canopy over the group.

"It was touch and go," said Selwyn, when in the cool of the evening the troopers were bearing the still insensible body over the rough ground on a hastily constructed litter; "another half-hour and those accursed dingoes would have secured their prey."

"We must camp at the same water-hole we were at last night, and we will immerse the body in water to drink in at the pores, for too much moisture must not be poured down the throat. Poor fellow! his tongue is so swollen, it will be days before he is able to speak."

"Never mind that," replied Selwyn, "as long as his life is saved; he'll soon come round. If he had not a wonderful constitution he could never have held out as he did."

"He has always been a steady fellow, that is what carried him through," remarked Dixon. "No man who had drunk and tampered with himself could have stood it. Do you remember the fate of poor Andrew Grierson? It was in the Warrego country, far away to the westward, and he had got up an exploring party to search for new country, of which I was one. It is some years ago now, before I joined the police. We started ten strong—for the blacks were very numerous and hostile—and took a long string of pack-horses, laden with rations, and a couple of ten-gallon kegs of rum, chiefly for

Grierson's use, who had accustomed himself to taking spirits until they had become an absolute necessity. I remember so well his picking out the steadiest horse to carry them, and his saying to me, 'If anything happens to those I shall die, for I can't live without some stimulant now.' Well, we had a terrible journey; the water was short, the feed for the horses bad, and the blacks kept us continually on the alert. Every night a shower of spears would come whizzing into the camp, thrown at random, I believe, but one of them pierced our best black boy through the lungs, and two whites were wounded. Never did an expedition have a better, braver, or more skilful leader than Andrew Grierson. Of herculean frame, thin, sinewy, and capable of standing any fatigue, he was ever foremost in danger; while his light spirits and buoyant nature shook off trouble as an oilskin coat shoots water. By the greatest tact he kept the little party cheerful and hopeful, even in our most dire extremity, and his pluck and perseverance were rewarded by the discovery of the noble Mandan plains, rich with the finest pasture, and along which you may drive a buggy for a hundred miles without meeting an obstacle. Our journey had proved a thorough success—how thorough the towns and villages now scattered over what was then *terra incognita* will amply testify—and we were return-

ing light-hearted and happy. Whilst crossing the range which gives birth to the Riven River—and well worthy of its name the same river is, for a more hideous conglomeration of heaped-up basalt human being never saw—we were attacked by a strong body of blacks, and it was only after hard fighting that we succeeded in beating them off. They had completely surrounded us, so we had to form a circle, with the horses under the charge of the two wounded men in the centre, whilst we replied to the showers of spears and boomerangs that fell thick around us with our carbines. The nature of the ground was all in favour of our enemies, who only showed for the moment it took to discharge their missiles and then withdrew again to the shelter afforded by the rocks, against which our bullets flattened harmlessly. I was keeping my eye on one rascal who had three times sent a spear within a hair's-breadth of my unhappy carcase, when I heard a struggle behind me, and was half knocked down by old Jupiter—the grog horse, as we called him—rushing past with a spear deeply imbedded in his flank. 'Mount and charge, boys,' roared Andrew; 'we *must* recover that horse.' We hastily obeyed, but too late to save poor Jupiter. As he galloped past the rock behind which my particular opponent was planted, the Myall launched another spear into his side, and

the old horse, maddened by pain, commenced to buck furiously. No pack-saddle made by human hands could have kept on the tortured animal's back, and at one mad plunge the girths parted, the two kegs flew high in the air, and, coming down on the sharp basalt, were stove to pieces. Whether the blacks had never before seen men on horseback I don't know, for at the time we were attacked we were on foot and leading our horses; but at all events they made no sort of stand, but leaping from crag to crag were soon out of reach of our bullets, all except the man who had planted the last spear in Jupiter. Andrew Grierson had never lost sight of him, and before he had emerged ten paces from his rocky covert, a rifle bullet doubled him up like a wet rag. With pannikins and quart pots, even by sopping our handkerchiefs and wringing them out, we attempted to capture the spilled liquor, but less than half-a-pint of dirty rum was the total result; the keen-edged basalt had pierced the staves, and the grog was irretrievably lost. I never shall forget Andrew's face as he superintended the futile attempt, nor his tone when, on reaching the camping-ground that night, he called me aside, and gave me directions regarding the safety of the party on the remainder of their homeward journey. It seemed incredible that a man, apparently in the enjoyment of sound bodily

health, should speak of his death as a foregone conclusion, simply from lack of stimulant ; but he evidently knew his constitution better than I did, for within forty-eight hours we had to dig the grave of as noble a fellow as ever set foot in stirrup. He died quite peaceably, and conscious to the last. ‘Can we do nothing for you?’ was asked again and again. ‘No, thank you, my dear lads ; only brandy could keep me going, and now I’m played out.’ Thus was lost to the country a man who had the courage and genius of a Sturt, a Leichhardt, or a Burke ; a man pre-eminently fitted by nature for the wild life in which his lot had been cast, and who might have had his name handed down to posterity honoured and revered, but who perished miserably among the ravines of the Riven Ranges, a victim to the demon Alcohol, that yearly thins the ranks of our best men. But here is the water-hole, and now let us see the effect of a bath on poor Fletcher.”

After his limbs had been chafed for some time in the tepid water, George manifested signs of recovery. His eyes, though still bloodshot and haggard, lighted up with the fire of recognition as his glance fell on Selwyn and Dixon ; and he attempted to speak, but the swollen tongue refused to shape articulate sounds. Some weak tea with a little spirit was given to him, and he shortly afterwards

dropped off into a deep sleep, carefully watched by his friends.

"I must be off after those scoundrels the moment we have lodged Fletcher in a place of safety," said Dixon; "they have got too far ahead of me as it is; but, with my boys to help me, the length and breadth of Australia shall not place them in safety."

"What can have become of the gold?" added Selwyn, for there was no vestige of it either about Fletcher or on his saddle.

"Impossible to say," replied Dixon; "but I hope he will soon be able to inform us. What will old Prescott say to having an invalid at Bovingdon? It is the nearest station, and we must take him there, for he is quite unfit to bear the journey to Maryborough."

"Oh, I'll answer for Prescott!" replied Selwyn "he is a most hospitable old fellow; both he and his daughter will do their best to make him comfortable. But listen, he is trying to speak!"

The words died feebly away, unintelligible to the listeners, and George, with a beseeching look, sank backwards again, weary with the exertion, and after another small quantity of tea, fell into a deep slumber lasting until the morning.

With the first glimpse of daylight the troopers were astir, and busied in arranging a sort of canopy

of boughs over the litter on which they were to carry George. He was much refreshed with his night's rest, and though still unable to speak, evidently stronger. Finding that his eager listeners quite failed to understand his murmurs, a thought struck him, and feebly smoothing the sand on which he lay, he wrote with his forefinger on the yielding surface—

“THE GOLD IS SAFE—I SUNK IT IN THE CREEK.”

“Hurrah! that is brave news,” said Selwin. “As soon as we have housed you safely at Bovingdon, I will take Pickwick and we’ll bring it back and relieve your mind.”

George was now so far recovered as to be able to drink in moderation without danger, and no nectar that pleasure ever quaffed could vie with the flavour of the coarse milkless tea that he painfully sipped from a tin pannikin. The troopers carried him on their shoulders with a springy tread that made the motion enjoyable, and lulled him into a sleep so sound that the cortège had arrived at Mr. Prescott’s station before he awoke. Selwyn had ridden on and prepared the squatter for his unexpected guest, and with true bush hospitality the best room was hastily made ready for the sufferer, where, nursed by his friend and sweet Lucy Prescott, George made rapid strides towards conva-

lescence. It was nearly a week before he was able to speak, and then his first words, after thanking his kind hostess, were a request to Selwyn to search for the gold. So firmly was the whole scene impressed upon his memory, that, despite the terrible ordeal he had undergone, he described the appearance of the locality in such truthful terms that the saddle-bags and their valuable contents were recovered without difficulty, and George had the pleasure of knowing that by his pluck and ingenuity he had outwitted the robbers. A whitened skeleton with grinning teeth and fleshless lips was all that remained of Jobson, and Selwyn had some difficulty in preventing Pickwick pocketing one of the bones to make a whistle.

"Plenty that fellow been blow* when he like it alive; mine make him blow now he gone bong,"† said the boy, who it turned out had been on the same station where Jobson was stockman, and the latter—a cruel vagabond—had bullied Pickwick until he ran away.

George suffered great pain from the blisters the sun had raised on his face, neck, and shoulders, and the whole skin of the exposed parts came

* "To blow," in Australia, signifies to "brag" or "bounce." Baron Munchausen's failing would be termed "blowing," and whenever a man deals largely in the marvellous he is called a "blower."

† "Gone bong," Anglice, "dead."

away like a mask ; thanks, however, to the soundness of his constitution and the diligence of his fair nurse he speedily became convalescent, and as he could not possibly be in kinder or more skilful hands, to her tender care we will leave him for the present.

CHAPTER X.

TIME had not meanwhile stood still with our friends in Canada. Swiftly the five years had rolled away, bringing with them mingled troubles and rewards; and now James and his wife were watching beside the bed of old Marsden, who was fast passing away to another, and we trust a better, world. To record minutely the events that occurred since we left James and Henry on the eve of the "raising bee," would be both tedious and uninteresting to the reader, whose patience, however, must be so far taxed as to listen whilst I narrate the leading incidents that transpired during that time.

The "raising bee" had promised to be a great success, for the hive worked vigorously, looking forward to the copious libations of whisky with which they knew the ceremony would terminate. But, against the advice of Henry, the old Californian had insisted on issuing spirits when the men left off work for a short rest and meal. Prodigal in his bounty, the cup had circulated freely, and on resuming labour the effect was visible in the

unsteady gait and vacant gaze of several of the men. Nor had the old man been prudent himself, and the frequent draughts of the fiery poison had affected even his seasoned frame. There is always a certain amount of danger in handling large masses of heavy timber; and as no process requires greater steadiness and caution than rolling the huge logs up the "skids," it may therefore be imagined how the risk is multiplied when the workmen are excited and careless. Both Henry and James had entreated the men for their own sakes to exercise every precaution; but their warnings were forgotten in a moment; and when a heavy log had been pushed and hauled to the top of the building, the men on the walls, whose duty it was to secure it, gave the signal for withdrawing the props and slackening the ropes before they had landed it safely in its place, and the heavy balk of timber rolled down the inclined plane, killing one man and dreadfully crushing two others, one of whom was old Marsden. Medical aid was far distant, but a messenger was immediately dispatched to Bison, where the nearest doctor resided, and in the interval the wounded men were removed into the tent, and their sufferings alleviated by fomentations and such simple remedies as lay within the reach of the Chippewa squaws, most of whom possess a rude knowledge of surgery.

For the poor young fellow that was killed, his case was perhaps the more sad, for he was a teetotaller, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." The whole College of Surgeons could have devised no cure for the comely form that now lay breathless and mutilated, so they made a bark coffin and laid him reverently to rest in the primeval forest, at the foot of a grand old birch-tree, whose boughs overhung the lake. Do you remember, reader, a beautiful unpublished fragment by Coleridge, that Sir Walter Scott has preserved in a note to "Castle Dangerous"?

"Where is the grave of Sir Arthur Orellan,—
 Where may the grave of that good knight be?
 By the marge of a brook, on the slope of Helvellyn,
 Under the boughs of a young birch-tree.
 The oak that in summer was pleasant to hear,
 That rustled in autumn all withered and sear,
 That whistled and groan'd thro' the winter alone,
 He hath gone, and a birch in his place is grown.
 The knight's bones are dust,
 His good sword is rust;
 His spirit is with the saints, we trust."

The good axe—the bread-winner in many a hard season—must now be hung up useless in the desolate "shanty," for the strong arm that was wont to wield it is stilled for ever, and the poor mother may mourn over the memory of her only-born,

who even in the Canadian wilds, fell an innocent victim to the destroyer, Alcohol.

The doctor arrived, and old Marsden had to hear, with such resignation as he possessed, that whilst life remained to him he would be a cripple. Fearful tidings these for any man, so think how they struck to the heart of one accustomed from childhood to an energetic and roving life. Time, with soothing hand, softened his savage outbursts against the injustice of Providence, and, under his niece's care, he became less fretful and irritable, coming in time to take an interest in the higher subjects to which she constantly strove to direct his attention.

Nellie joined her brother at The Beavers before winter set in, and, having seen him comfortably settled, there was no reason why her union with Henry should be longer deferred, except that James begged her to give him a fortnight to gain old Marsden's consent to his marriage with Bessie taking place on the same day. The old man had taken a great fancy to James, who had nursed him most tenderly during his illness, and expressed himself perfectly willing that the wedding should take place, but stipulated that the bridegroom should live at "Ricebrook," as his farm was named, and either let or sell The Beavers. James hardly liked this scheme; but when Bessie pointed out

how absolutely necessary it was that some one whom he loved should always be in attendance on her uncle, and pictured the desolate life the poor crippled old man would lead by himself, James's heart smote him for his selfishness, and he willingly agreed to a suggestion of Mr. Marsden's, that some trustworthy person should be placed in charge of The Beavers, and farm it under James's supervision. Silas Quidd was the individual selected, and he betook himself and his taciturnity to the banks of Lake Widgeon, where his care and experience rendered The Beavers a highly profitable possession. In the succeeding spring the double wedding took place in Bison, amidst the general rejoicing of the small population, and the happy couples retired respectively to "Grassmere" and "Ricebrook." No other event of importance occurred in either of the families until the birth of a young Henry, which interesting event was shortly followed by the appearance of a lovely little girl rejoicing in the name of Agnes Fletcher.

And thus time wore on, unmarked by any startling episode. The country in the neighbourhood of Lake Widgeon turned out exceptionally rich and fertile; the first few houses of a new township had arisen round a quiet mill erected as a speculation by James and Henry, and the margin of the lake was becoming studded with farms. Meanwhile,

despite all the care and attention shown to him by his niece and her husband, old Marsden had been gradually sinking. The fearful injuries he had received had completely shattered a constitution already enfeebled by excess, and it became evident to them both that the end must shortly arrive. He seemed fully conscious of it himself, and so much had he latterly profited by the gentle promptings of Bessie Fletcher, that he talked of it with composure, and seemingly without dread. But there were times when he became painfully depressed, sitting silent and brooding for days, and drinking deeply if the bottle was incautiously placed where he could crawl to it on his crutches. His sleep at these periods was broken, and he would utter wild cries at night, and talk hurriedly and brokenly in a strange dialect that James detected as the curious jargon of the Spanish-American diggers of Lower California. After a while these fits of despondency passed away, and the old man would remain tolerably cheerful until another attack ; but from the disjointed fragments he unconsciously let fall, it was evident that something weighed heavily on his mind.

We have now brought the reader up to the time that James and his wife were sitting by the bed on which their uncle lay, evidently dying. Wearied out by incessant watching, Bessie, having finished reading a chapter in the Bible, retired to rest for a

short time at James's request, he himself remaining to tend the sufferer. Old Marsden was lying with his eyes closed, and they had imagined him to be asleep; but such was evidently not the case, for directly his niece had left the room, he said feebly—

“Are you alone, Jim?”

James nodded an affirmative.

“Then give me a glass of whisky, and I'll tell you something that has been heavy on my conscience for many a long weary day. I can't last out long now, and I feel I should die easier if I had no secret weighing me down.”

James complied with his request, and after a minute or two, when the spirit had commenced to take effect, he continued—

“Mine has been a wild life, Jim—a wild life and a wicked one. I ran away from home when I was quite a lad, and went to sea. I was pretty sharp, and managed to pick up navigation enough to enable me to take a ship from one place to another. To tell of all my adventures and the scrapes that I got into, chiefly from insubordination and drunkenness, would take more time than I can spare now. Enough to say that in one ship, whilst bound to the East Indies, I had a quarrel with the mate two days after leaving harbour, struck him in my rage, and found myself in irons. The vessel called in at Madeira, where I managed to escape—perhaps they

knew of it, and were glad to get rid of me—and as I was a good seaman I soon had offers from the owners of the low-looking, black-hulled schooners, that are nominally fruit ships, but in reality slavers. Bad as I was, I did not like the idea of this detestable traffic ; but I was penniless, pressed by hunger and threatened with delivery to the first British man-of-war that called in at Funchal Roads unless I acceded, so, weighing all these circumstances, and the pay being remarkably good, I smothered all further prickings of conscience, and joined the ‘Tres Marias,’ a beautiful schooner, bound for the Bight to take in her cargo, and from thence to the Brazils. At first I was quite horror-struck by the fearful sights I saw around me ; but grog was plentiful, and I used to drown my disgust in liquor until habit accustomed me to the scene of human suffering, and all feeling of its wickedness wore away. Yet, callous as I had become, I could hardly stand some of the devilry they resorted to when closely pressed by British cruisers. One of these plans was to pitch the slaves overboard one by one, so that the pursuing vessel might lose ground by stopping to pick them up, and the shrieks of these miserable wretches as they were nipped in half or dragged down by the voracious sharks ring in my ears still. Though our captain was the hardest man in a hard trade, cramming more of the wretched

Africans into a confined space, and feeding them less than any of his compeers, some devil must have guided him in the skill he displayed in evading capture. Three times we made a successful run, and landed such of our unhappy freight as had survived the horrors of the middle passage at a small port on the Brazilian coast, from whence they were marched overland to Rio de Janeiro. What was it to us that, from confinement and foul air, men, women, and children died, until we found it too much trouble to remove the corpses? We landed half the cargo, and could afford to waste the rest. It was no mercy or humanity that caused us to lower a boat to pick up a wretch when, weary of such a hell upon water, he threw himself overboard, hoping to attain rest in the deep blue depths of the glassy sea. Greed alone prompted the act, for was not the living slave worth gold? But enough of such deeds of horror. Retribution, though it came with tardy footsteps, was none the less following in the wake of the slave ship, and on the fourth voyage she was sunk by the guns of a frigate, whose fire the infatuated captain had insisted on returning. When I saw his intention I had jumped overboard and was picked up by the man-of-war, which I found was bound for the Pacific, and had only fallen in with the schooner by the merest accident; so, after all, the cunning by which the 'Tres

Marias' had eluded her legitimate enemies was fruitless. I volunteered at once, glad by such a course to avoid awkward questioning, and was entered on the ship's books, first as an able seaman, but soon afterwards, when they found out what I was worth, rated as a petty officer. I might have got on well in the navy—I liked the work, the order, and the regularity, and after a time I liked the discipline—but the bottle changed all my life again. I got disrated for intemperance, and one Christmas Day while the ship was at anchor off Moleje, in the Gulf of California, in my drunken frenzy I struck an officer. Such an offence on board a man-of-war is always visited with the most severe punishment, and I was sentenced to receive four dozen lashes at the gangway. The night before the execution of the sentence I managed to escape the vigilance of the sentry, slipped quietly overboard, and swam ashore. The coast was teeming with sharks, and as I struck out the thoughts of the poor slaves that I had often assisted to doom to so awful a death rose before me in all their horror, and I nearly sank through sheer terror. I was mercifully permitted to reach the shore unharmed, and, making my way to the nearest 'rancho,' told my story without hesitation to the proprietor, for I knew the lawless Mexican would take any side that ran counter to authority. He gave me a horse and

directed me to a place where I lay until the frigate sailed. I found afterwards that but little inquiry had been made after me, for it was naturally concluded that I was either drowned or eaten up. From my life on board the 'Tres Marias' I could speak Portuguese, and as that language and Spanish are closely allied, I found no difficulty in making my way amongst the Mejicanos. The life of a 'vaquero' or mounted herdsman suited me admirably, and I should never have left Lower California, had not a rumour of the discovery of vast gold-fields on the Sacramento River penetrated to the remote 'ranchos' of the peninsula, and aroused all the restlessness that had been lying dormant within me. Extraordinary fortune attended me at the mines, where everything I touched seemed to turn into gold, and any speculation in which 'Mexican Sam'—as I was called—had a share was looked upon as a certain success. But here again the demon drink ruined me, for under its influence I was induced to gamble, and my money never remained by me a day. At last, tired of showering her favours on such an improvident gamester, Fortune betook herself elsewhere, leaving me stranded, regularly high and dry for my last doubloon had gone at 'euchre.' I went to my late partner and asked him to lend me a hundred dollars to start me again.

“‘You’ll only gamble it away, Sam,’ he replied; ‘it’ll do you no good; if I thought it would, I’d give it you with pleasure.’

“I promised faithfully that I would not touch a card, and I believe I meant it at the time, but happening to drop in to a bar for a drink, I saw my old Mexican game of ‘monte’ going on, and in half-an-hour I left the bar without a single cent of the hundred dollars in my pocket. I now got lower and lower, for the friends who had been glad enough to be seen with me during my run of luck now turned their backs on me as if I had been a mad dog. I became the companion of sharpers, and found out too late how I had been openly cheated—so openly that unless I had been blinded with liquor I must have detected the flimsy artifices that veiled their knaveries. I thus led a precarious existence for some months, during which my late partner had been steadily at work, and had saved a large amount of money. I knew it was no use applying to him again for help, for he was so annoyed at the manner in which I had disposed of the last sum that he had openly declared he would have nothing more to do with me. This vexed me more than anything, and the scoundrels with whom I was mixed up knew well enough where the shoe pinched and took good care the sore should not heal.

“‘Why, Sam, your mate hadn’t no right to break

off partnership 'cause you was a bit down in your luck ; hang me if I'd stand it if I was you,' said one. 'He stuck to you while your luck lasted,' pursued the tempter, 'and what right has he got to throw you over? I consider, and so do most on these diggings, for I've heard them say so, that the half of what he's got still belongs to you, and blessed if I don't wonder how you put up with it. Daylight robbery I call it, nothing less.'

" 'Sam'll have to be smart about it,' replied another, 'for his mate is a-gwine down to Frisco to-morrow to post the tin in the bank.'

"Goaded by their taunts, half deceived by their jesuitical arguments, and half maddened by liquor, I agreed with two of them to waylay Ned, and to demand my share of the gold, and the place selected was a quiet gully some four miles away from the diggings, through which the road ran. We slipped quietly away during the night, taking plenty of liquor with us, and *cachéd* until daylight. I drank more and more as the time approached, to deaden conscience, and by the time his mule's foot-falls were heard I was fit for any villany. I rushed out and seized his bridle, demanding my portion of the money ; but seeing the state I was in he evidently thought it was only a drunken frolic, for he recommended me most kindly to return to

the township, and offered me a doubloon to get a new pick and set to work. Maddened by drink I drew my revolver, but before I could fire the report of a pistol rang through the gully, and Ned fell from his mule shot through the lungs by my cowardly associates. I was too stupefied with horror to take much heed of what passed around me, but I remember the two ruffians, my companions, stripping the still breathing man of his earnings, and then escaping, taking the mule with them. I carried poor Ned to the shade afforded by some chapperal brush, and remained with him for the short time that elapsed before he died. He was sensible to the last, but only spoke once, and that sentence has haunted me through life.

“ ‘ Sam, you are my *murderer* ! ’ ”

“ I sat speechless, watching the reproachful eyes until they were sealed in death, and then turned and fled. How I lived until I reached San Francisco I have no recollection. Those eyes seemed to haunt me everywhere. I entered on board a vessel bound for Australia, in hopes that change of scene would lessen the remorse that devoured me, but in vain. Fruitless also were the arguments with which I strove to quiet my conscience, that my hand had not fired the fatal shot ; the dread words, ‘ You are my murderer,’ were ever present in my thoughts, banishing rest, for in my sleep I feared that my

unguarded tongue would give utterance to the dark memories that destroyed my peace, and causing me to be looked upon by my shipmates as a man to be shunned and dreaded. At Melbourne I left the vessel and took to a stockman's life until the discovery of gold at Ballarat and Bendigo, when I returned to my old trade of a digger. My Californian experience here came in usefully, and I made a large sum of money, which I put into the savings bank, retaining sufficient to keep me supplied with the liquor that I now drank in enormous quantities. At last, seeing several faces that I had known in California, and amongst them one of the men who had been my accomplice in poor Ned's death, I fled from Australia and sought a refuge in the backwoods of Canada. Undeserving as I am, I have prospered, and your wife will have a richer dower than 'Ricebrook.' Nay, the money has been all fairly got, and you may use it with a clear conscience," for James made a gesture as if wishing to speak. "My poor mate had no kith or kin in the wide world, for he had often told me his history. God knows I have often wished that he had, that I might have made some small atonement for my misdeeds. When I had been settled here for some time, my thoughts turned to the old country, and hearing that your wife had been left alone and unprotected in the world I sent for her. And now,

Jim, you have heard my sad story, and on looking back I can clearly trace my downward career to the curse of drink. But for liquor I should never have been insubordinate and struck the mate of the Indiaman ; but for liquor poor Ned would be yet alive, and his death would not be so heavy on my mind. It is the curse of every clime and every country, for nine-tenths of the crime in the world is committed under its influence ; but I feel better for having made a clean breast of it ; and now leave me for a little, for I shall get to sleep, and you are tired out yourself."

The next morning the old man was better ; he seemed to rally now he had confessed everything, and the following day the clergyman from Bison—who had been quietly written to by Bessie—arrived, and on hearing the outline of his eventful life, determined to remain at "Ricebrook" until the end. This did not happen for a month, and during that period a wonderful change was wrought by the ministrations of the pastor, and the gentle admonitions of his niece. The fierce and intractable spirit became soothed under the healing promises from above ; the seared heart admitted a ray of hope as the glorious future that awaits the repentant sinner fell softly upon his listening ear, and when at the last he passed away, quietly and calmly as an infant drops to rest, the little group around

his bed knew that their efforts had been rewarded, and that even as they knelt the enfranchised spirit was winging its upward course to those glorious realms where there is great and abundant joy over one frail sinner that repenteth.

He was found to be worth more than £7,000, besides "Ricebrook" and another farm on the borders of Lake Ontario; and this large sum was left unconditionally to James and his wife, with the exception of a legacy of £1,000 to the little settlement of Liberia, in Africa, "as some small amends for wicked injustice done." His will also showed that his keen observation had been fully at work ever since his accident, for a note was attached, calling James's attention to the splendid trees with which the country abounded, and strongly recommending the construction of a saw-mill, and the employment of a gang of lumbermen to procure the timber. On consulting with Henry, James found that he fully approved of the speculation; "In fact," he said, "I have often thought of the same thing myself, but have never had a sum large enough to start it."

"Of course you'll join me now," said James.

"Well, I'll see how much I can scrape up, I dare say enough to take a quarter share; but, Jim, we must get rid of the grist-mill, it won't do to have too many irons in the fire."

"That's true enough, but who is there about here that can afford to buy it?"

"Oh, let Quidd have it: he has often cast longing eyes at it, and he is an honest fellow, and has served us both faithfully for many years. You are going to sell 'The Beavers,' you say?"

"Yes," replied James; "my time will be fully taken up with 'Ricebrook' and the saw-mill. I tell you what, Henry, a bright idea has just struck me; why don't you sell 'Grassmere,' and I'll let you have 'The Beavers' cheap? We should be close to each other then, and you could help in the management of the lumbering, for I'm not particularly well up in the business. It would be a charming plan, and 'The Beavers' is more fertile than your own place, which is getting a little used up now."

"It really is not half a bad idea," said Henry, "and I'll consult Nellie about it, though I know her answer beforehand, for she is always wanting me to move to Lake Widgeon."

And Henry was perfectly right when he said he knew what would be his wife's answer, for she jumped at the thought of being so near her brother and Bessie, and thus it came about that Henry moved to "The Beavers," *vice* Quidd, promoted to the grist-mill, and the family, if not quite living together, were within a very short distance of each other, and a day rarely elapsed without some com-

munication by canoe in summer, and by sleigh over the ice-bound lake in winter, between the lady department of the two farms.

As for the men, they had selected the site for the saw-mill, and were lucky in finding a spot where, by the construction of sundry flumes and dams, a splendid fall of water could be obtained, an indispensable requirement for a Canadian mill. An engineer had arrived from Toronto, and having approved of the proposed situation, and handed in an estimate of the expenses, which they were agreeably surprised to find fell short of the sum they had expected, the machinery was ordered, and a gang of men were at once set to work by the contractor, preparing for its reception.

But both Henry and James had other duties to attend to, and duties which will perhaps surprise the reader who is unacquainted with the internal economy of Canada. Both Captain Hughes and Lieutenant Fletcher had to attend the military school at Kingston, and undergo a certain number of days' training in each year.

When people in England moan over the Dominion as the most vulnerable portion of the Empire, and are always in imagination anticipating the day when the monster Republic shall swallow it up without salt, they are either crassly ignorant of their subject, or belong to that peculiar class upon whom

argument has no effect, and the clearest evidence is thrown away. Were they to make inquiry they would find out that the Dominion contains within herself abundant and ever-ready means of protecting herself.

“A few raw militiamen, without training and badly armed, who could never stand for five minutes before regular troops,” say the alarmists; “how could such a handful of men defend three thousand miles of frontier?”

A recent writer* thus ably states it in a few words:—“The Canadians are a peculiarly warlike people, both in their training and temper, presenting, in this characteristic inherited from England, a distinct contrast to the growing disposition of the people of the United States. Certainly the Canadians on sufficient provocation would fight for their country, even if they had to fight unaided; and they would be very hard to beat. ‘It was difficult to conquer the South,’ they say with quiet assurance, ‘but to subdue the North would be impossible.’ They are hardy, stubborn, valorous; a nation of soldiers more truly than any people of the age, with the doubtful exception of Prussia. The difficult character of the country and the severity of their winter would give them extreme advantages. Nature would fight for them. Con-

* Mr. Charles Marshall.

sidering that it is a continental boundary, Canada possesses a frontier singularly suited for defence. The magnificent St. Lawrence and the great system of lakes make Canada a vast intrenched and moated camp. Guarded by gun-boats, by far the greater proportion of the country would be inaccessible. The landing of a large invading force, except at some few points, would be to court disaster. The weak places in the natural line of defence are well known; they have been fought over before, and defended by the fathers of the present generation. These points could again be protected by earthworks and resolute armies. That Canada can be taken at one gulp, 'like an oyster to tickle the appetite,' as an American lately said to me, is a statement only to be smiled at. A gourmand would enjoy better the swallowing of the oyster-shell."

It is a significant fact, not generally known, that all men in the Dominion between the ages of eighteen and sixty are liable by law to military service. The proportion of the adult population that has received some amount of training is very considerable. The period of service in the militia is three years, with sixteen days' drill each year, during which the men receive a pay of half-a-dollar a-day. The returns in the Government report, made to December 31, 1869, show an active force

of 43,541 men, with a militia reserve of 612,467—total 656,008 men.

“Nor are these pen-and-ink forces. On the occasion of the Fenian raid in 1862, 20,000 men turned out in four-and-twenty hours. This year, 1870, when 40,000 were called for, 43,000 responded within the specified time. With what efficiency they did the work then needed of them is within the popular recollection. They executed forced marches, and chose and used advantageous positions to the satisfaction of military critics. These slight affairs were but playing at war, but they served to show the military capacity of the people.”

Respecting the present condition of the militia force, I will quote briefly the report of Colonel P. Robertson-Ross, made to the Dominion Government, March, 1870:—

“There are few of these battalions (of infantry) without some officers or men who have previously served in the regular army, and many of them at some time actively in the field. The presence of these men in the ranks is of the utmost importance, and tends to impart a feeling of military strength and steadiness throughout the whole; for there is a very large number of men who have previously served as soldiers settled in the Dominion. The rural battalions are almost entirely composed of

the agricultural population, the bone and sinew of the land, who have a stake in the country, and in very many instances are the proprietors and sons of proprietors of the land; *and it is impossible to see a hardier race or finer material for soldiers.* In many instances their physique is remarkable, and they all appear imbued with a spirit of the greatest loyalty to their Queen and country, and the same spirit of aptitude for military service is exhibited by the city battalions, who are composed mainly of intelligent and educated artisans and mechanics. Considering, moreover, the short period of time allowed for the annual drill, the degree of advancement at which they have arrived is most creditable, and they are all now quite ready to go into brigade.

“In the event of war, sufficient numbers of men could always be obtained from the large militia reserve to swell the ranks of the active force to any strength likely to be required, for it is a fact that the population of the Dominion comprehends nearly as many men within the fighting ages as the Southern States in the neighbouring Republic ever brought into the field; and the men of Canada, both morally and physically, are not only equal to any that the world can produce, but in point of hardihood, manliness of spirit, and fitness for military service, are not to be surpassed.”

Now, from the perusal of the above, the unbiassed reader will at once see that Canada, far from being a source of weakness to the British Empire, and a thorn in the side of that everlasting martyr, the British ratepayer, is perfectly able and ready to take care of itself, if supported by the English fleet, as it undoubtedly would be. The Canadians are quite unable to enter into the fear of America that seems to obtain to such an unreasonable extent in England, and they—numerically weak as they are—laugh to scorn the idea of an invasion. Depend upon it, a commercial people such as the inhabitants of the United States will think twice before they send an army to be destroyed by the severity of a Canadian winter, or to perish beneath the unerring bullet of the Dominion rifleman. I make no apology for this digression, for the subject, though of such importance, is but little known ; if, however, these last few pages will cause but one alarmist to pause, and make a little inquiry before enlarging on a visionary and chimerical future, pregnant with disaster and a higher income tax, I shall feel that the latter part of this chapter has not been written in vain.

CHAPTER XI.

THE lumber trade, or, in other words, the obtaining and transporting by water the giant trees with which the forests abound, is one of the largest and most lucrative industries of the Dominion of Canada. A speculator, hearing of fine timber on some distant land, determines to organise an expedition for the purpose of obtaining it, and accordingly hires a gang of from twenty to forty men, and sends them to the scene of their labours at the fall of the year. The men themselves are a peculiar class, and in each gang are generally found the representatives of many nationalities. Bold, reckless, and hardy, they revel in the dangers and vicissitudes with which their calling is beset, and form a class altogether apart from the agricultural labourers of the Dominion. On arrival at their destination, the first step is to prepare their camp for the winter, and this is done by building a huge log hut for themselves, a store for the provisions, and a stable for the horses, from the enormous logs by which they are surrounded. The site for the camp is

chosen, and soon the trees are felled, logged up and dragged into their places, and in an incredibly short time the substantial dwelling is run up, its size of course being determined by the number of men who are destined to inhabit it, but from thirty to forty-five feet square is by no means unusual. A large hole is left in the centre of the roof for the escape of the smoke from the blazing fire they will require during the severe winter, and, with the exception of a door, no other aperture is needed. Round the sides bunks are rigged, as in a ship, and in most cases each bunk has two inmates, for the sake of additional warmth. The huge fire is placed on a solid stage two feet high and ten feet square in the centre of the apartment, constructed of timber and clay, and from a rude crane at the corner of this is swung backwards and forwards at will the copper that does general cooking duty for the company. Here in the winter evenings the men assemble, pile on huge logs, swallow mighty jorums of the blackest and strongest of tea, devour salt pork by the "whole hog," and then, lighting their pipes, while away the hours with yarns of backwood adventures, bear-hunts, and thrilling episodes of rapid shootings on the rafts. Despite the diversity of countries and creeds, they rarely quarrel, but live most amicably together, their whole lives more nearly approaching to a sailor's

than any other class, a likeness rendered more striking by their possessing a large share of the *bonhomie* and artlessness that distinguishes "Jack afloat." At daylight they sally forth, divided into parties of half-a-dozen, and work unremittingly until dusk at felling and preparing the trees that have been marked by the leader of the expedition. And this is the scene to be present at, reader, if you wish to see the American axe properly handled. Two men stride up to a forest giant, glance upwards for one moment to note the inclination, and then the keen instruments are buried to the head in the devoted tree. From right to left the axes swing, the clean-cut chips fly abroad in showers, and ere your wonder has ceased at the marvellous precision of each stroke, the thunder of rent and splintered boughs proclaims the downfall of the forest monarch.

Thus the winter wears away with the lumbermen, and at the first appearance of a thaw they commence preparing the fruits of their labour for its water transit. Each log is marked or branded, so as to be easily recognisable should it by any mischance separate from the others, and the mighty mass is pushed out into the stream by men armed with poles, having sharp spikes at their ends. Where a sudden curve occurs in the river and amongst the foaming rapids, a dead lock frequently

happens, and the whole moving mass is brought to a standstill, while the swift current is every moment adding fresh logs to increase the obstacle.

Now comes the tug of war, for the experienced lumberman knows that the detention is caused by the "contrariness" of one log, which has become wedged athwart the stream, or got itself into some position in which it has no earthly business. With axe in hand, and a muttered prayer for the welfare of the wife and little ones at Quebec, the sure-footed and daring man springs lightly from log to log, while the whole mass emits horrid creaking and riving sounds as the force of the water grinds the imprisoned trunks against each other. Fearlessly he pursues his hazardous career; and now he has reached the cause of all the mischief, and his keen eye tells him that if the "key log" can be displaced the "block" will be at an end. Poised lightly on an adjacent trunk, the axe flashes in the air and is buried in the offending member. Again and again the strokes fall, and now from the enormous pressure behind it must soon yield. It cracks, and the hideous grinding becomes louder and louder as new masses are borne against the barrier. One more stroke; it gives, and, burying his axe in the log on which he stands, to afford some slight support, the gallant lumberer is hurried down the boiling rapid, accompanied by the surging timber.

Now he runs to one extremity of his log to avoid a huge beam, which, taking the ground, rises perpendicularly on end, and, again falling, would have brushed him off as though he were a fly had he retained his ground. And now he feels that his resting-place is about to roll over ; but he is equal to the occasion, and with cool head and sure foot he springs lightly to the next log—though he bemoans the loss of his good axe, which he had not time to extricate—and soon the whole mass is gliding gently along, for smooth water has been reached.

But not always is the lumberman so successful. Too often cases happen in which the lightest foot and the steadiest head are of no avail, and a crushed and mutilated body found floating in the river is all that remains of the intrepid backwoodsman. Indeed, few callings are exposed to more danger ; for the felling is not without risk, and the hauling out of the huge trees with strong teams of horses is a most hazardous duty, for whilst guiding the heavy mass with the handspike, a slight inequality in the ground may cause it to “cant,” and to bury the lumberer beneath it. Yet the life is essentially a pleasant one, even when the risks are taken into consideration. There is a freedom and unconstraint about it that has a peculiar charm for such adventurous spirits as scorn any settled

industry and abhor the very name of a fixed residence.

When the rapids are all passed and the broad stream reached, the logs are bound together in enormous rafts, sometimes many acres in extent, and on these the lumbermen build shanties, and float tranquilly down with the current. These days, as they lazily bear the raft off from some point, before resuming their recumbent position with the well-blackened pipe between their lips, and bask in the genial influence of the sunshine—these are the lumberer's halcyon days, the time that with him corresponds to "beer and skittles," or to the grog and tobacco paradise of the sailor. He has plenty to eat, is delightfully idle, and supremely happy, though long before the raft has reached its destination he will weary of such utter inaction, and begin to count the days to next fall, when he will be amongst the trees again.

The life of a lumberer is not one that it would be expedient for any emigrant to embrace, unless he were a Norwegian who had been brought up to the business. Few men who had not been accustomed to the instrument from earliest youth could gain the required experience with the axe, and its thorough knowledge is essential to the lumberer. No intending emigrant who reads this need, however, be disappointed, for there are abundance of other

openings in Canada far better adapted to him than this precarious calling.

When the logs that are intended to be broken up in the country have arrived at the saw-mills they are hauled up an inclined plane by either water or steam power, and one by one brought in contact with the glittering teeth of the circular saws, which cut them into planks of whatever dimensions are most in request. The timber that is reserved for export is floated down to Québec and there shipped, not by being hoisted on board, but by holes knocked in the bows of the vessels.

In 1864 the United States imposed a heavy duty on the Canadian lumber, in hopes of the Dominion becoming favourable to union, but it has recoiled on themselves, for the only consequence it brought about was an increase in the price placed on the lumber by the Dominion merchants, and renewed expressions of loyalty from the inhabitants.

Some idea of the magnitude of the trade and its importance to Canada may be formed from the fact that the value of the exports of wood and timber to Great Britain *alone*, in 1871, was £3,900,670, made up chiefly of hewn timber, of the value of £1,855,400, and of sawn wood, of the value of £1,832,210. The export to the United States is estimated at 700,000,000 feet per annum, or about half of the total quantity sent out of the country!

As the following despatch from Lord Elgin gives a remarkably good idea of the vastness of the country, I quote it for the information of the reader. He is speaking of the valley of the Ottawa, from whence the majority of the timber comes :—" This important region takes the name by which it is designated in popular parlance from the mighty stream which flows through it, and which, though it be but a tributary of the St. Lawrence, is one of the largest of the rivers that run uninterruptedly from the source to the discharge within the dominions of the Queen. It drains an area of about 80,000 square miles, and receives at various points in its course the waters of streams, some of which equal in magnitude the chief rivers of Great Britain. These springs open up to the enterprise of the lumberman the almost inexhaustible pine forests with which this region is clothed, and afford the means of transporting their produce to market.

" From the nature of the business, the lumbering trade falls necessarily in a great measure into the hands of persons of capital, who employ large bodies of men at points far removed from markets, and who are therefore called upon to make considerable advances in providing food and necessaries for their labourers, as well as in building slides and otherwise facilitating the passage of timber along

the streams and rivers. Many thousands of men are employed during the winter in these remote forests preparing the timber, which is transported during the summer in rafts, or, if sawn, in boats, to Quebec when destined for England, and up the Richelieu River when intended for the United States. It is a most interesting fact, both in a moral and hygienic view, that for some years past intoxicating liquors have been rigorously excluded from almost all the chantiers, as the dwellings of the lumbermen in these distant regions are styled; and that, notwithstanding the exposure of the men to cold during the winter, and wet in the spring, the result of the experiment has been entirely satisfactory.

“The bearing of the lumbering business on the settlement of the country is a point well worthy of notice. The farmer who undertakes to cultivate unreclaimed land in new countries generally finds that not only does every step of advance which he makes in the wilderness, by removing him from the centres of trade and civilisation, enhance the cost of all he has to purchase, but that, moreover, it diminishes the value of that he has to sell. It is not so, however, with the farmer who follows in the wake of the lumbermen. He finds, on the contrary, in the wants of the latter a ready demand for all that he produces, at a price not only equal to that procurable in the ordinary marts, but

increased by the cost of transport from them to the scene of the lumbering operations. This circumstance, no doubt, powerfully contributes to promote the settlement of those districts, and attracts population to sections of the country which, in the absence of any such inducement, would probably remain for long periods uninhabited."

Of course the operations undertaken by James and Henry were of a smaller nature, aiming only to supply the fast rising little township of "Marsdenville" with sawn timber for their houses and fences. The district, which was becoming rapidly populated, would absorb a great deal more; and as settlers always follow lumbering parties, there would be no lack of applicants for the sawn stuff.

One day in summer, after the Hughes's had been established for nearly two years at "The Beavers," Nellie crossed over the lake on a visit to the Fletchers, and on James entering the room where she was seated with Bessie, said—

"Who do you think I've heard from, Jim? and he talks of coming here to settle; wouldn't it be delightful? But here is his letter."

"Whose letter?" said James.

"Why, George's, of course. Read it, for it is full of news, and makes up for the long time he has kept us without a line."

James opened the letter, and read as follows:—

“WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.

“MY DEAR LITTLE NELLIE,

“You must have begun to think that I had forgotten all about you, so long is it since I last wrote ; and I now feel not only much ashamed of myself, but also that my correspondence is in such terrible arrears that I scarcely know where to begin. I think in my last I told you of my escape from the bushrangers, and what a severe illness I had been mercifully permitted to recover from. Well, as soon as I was strong enough I went down to Brisbane, and found that the shareholders in the mining concern of which I was manager had made a great fuss about what they called my gallantry, &c. (I blush to write it), and I was presented with a handsome service of plate, which clearly proves that at the right time something is to be gained by showing a clean pair of heels. But a more wonderful thing was to follow. Old Dobson, the member for the Burnett District, retired, and, whether I liked it or not, indeed without the option of a choice, I was elected to fill his place. A new manager was appointed at Gympie, but I was made chairman of the directors, and took up my abode at Bendemeer, for my partner Dawson had gone on a visit to England. I found the plantation

was succeeding wonderfully—indeed, my banker's book proved it satisfactorily—and we never did a wiser thing than enlarging the premises. I thought that I should feel very shy on taking my seat, and much awed by the august assembly amongst whom my lot was thrown; but I was perfectly wrong, and the most timid man may rest assured that the concentrated wisdom of these Solons is more likely to provoke his laughter than his fear. Every-day thoughts are spoken of in every-day language, sometimes, I should perhaps say, in language that you *don't* hear every day. But now, Nellie dear, I am coming to a thing which I know will be of interest to you. I am going to be married to my kind nurse Lucy Prescott, on my return to Queensland three months hence; and I am sure when you see your new sister you will find a space for her in your warm little heart. But this reminds me that I have not yet explained the reason of this letter being dated from New Zealand. The fact is, that since my ride on that eventful day I have never been quite the thing. The doctors tell me that this hot climate is affecting my liver, and that if I wish to regain perfect health I must move, for some years at least, to a more temperate region. I cannot but feel that they are in the right, and though it vexes me much to leave a colony where I have made many dear and true friends, and in

which I may with justice say I hold a considerable stake, yet health being of such paramount importance, I have, after due consultation with Lucy, determined to visit you in Canada, and if I see any opening, most probably to take up my abode there for good. I have made already a comfortable independence, and, as I shall continue in partnership with Mr. Dawson, the income I receive from the sugar plantation will flow in regularly, most likely increasing annually, for that industry is becoming daily of greater importance. I came here a week ago for a little rest, whilst the lawyers are settling my affairs, and feel already much better from the bracing nature of the climate. Mr. Dawson is on his way from England *via* Panama, and is to join me here, when the last business arrangements will be concluded, and I am then to meet Lucy at Sydney, where our marriage is to take place, and we embark immediately for England, which I wish my wife to see before we visit you in Canada. Of course I shall have a look at dear old Norton, regarding which I have an idea, that I intend propounding to Jim when we meet. On looking back at the wonderful change that has taken place in all our conditions since the day that we parted on the deck of the 'Zenobia,' only nine years ago, I feel that God has blessed our endeavours; and if I am only spared to see you again, I

shall rest perfectly contented. Good-bye, dear, for a few short months. I can hardly realise my timid little Nellie the mother of two boys, it seems too absurd. Tell old Jim to write to Montreal, advising me of the best route to reach your populous, though, I shrewdly imagine, rather outlandish district, and with much love,

“Your affectionate Brother,

“GEORGE FLETCHER.”

“Well, this is good news,” said James, when he had finished reading the letter, “and I don’t wonder at your looking so mysterious when I came in. George is the last man in the world I should have expected to see on Lake Widgeon, but there is plenty of room here for half Kent if they like to come, and we’ll give him a bonny welcome, eh, Nellie?”

Early in 1871, George and his Australian bride reached “Ricebrook,” when they at once purchased an adjoining farm, on which they built a good frame-work house. The climate suited them both, and George’s constitution speedily regained its tone. His engineering skill made itself apparent within a week of his arrival, for by a simple yet most ingenious mechanical contrivance the mill power was more than doubled, and, fresh machinery being added, a proportionate

increase in the profits resulted. His Queensland plantation continues to pay right royally, and he intends paying it a short visit after a certain interesting event has taken place. In his letter he mentioned a project he had in view with regard to Norton, which was no other than its purchase, not for himself or James—they were perfectly happy in the land of their adoption—but for one of their children when he should grow up, so that the old stock of the “Fletchers of Norton” should still be found in the Isle of Thanet. The proposal was gladly acceded to by James, and the old farm, though let for some years, is now the property of the two brothers. From the latest accounts they were all prospering and happy; and therefore, reader, I bring the history of this family to a close. By perseverance and integrity they attained to the position they now hold, and if you carry these two qualities with you to either Canada or Australia, I make little doubt that your history, when written, will have as favourable a termination as

THE FORTUNES OF THE FLETCHERS

THE END.

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